COMIC CRUSADER #16

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CRUSADER COMMENTS

THE TIME HAS COME! IT'S TIME TO ENTER THE FANTASTIC WORLD OF COMICS!

Over the years Comic Crusader has slanted its articles more towards the "golden age" than present day material. For a change of pace, this issue takes you behind the scenes of recent comics. I've selected what I feel are some of the outstanding publications of recent years and given you a new, fresh look at them. The unpublished Gil Kane "Black Mark" drawing on this page sets the pace for this issue...As does the Kirby "Sultin". He points the way to some of the finest art and articles done by fans and pro's for an amateur publication.

E-Man is a super hero far apart from the others on the comic book scene today. His adventures are fun to read, both from an artistic and writing standpoint. This is due to the care the team of Joe Staton and Nicola Cuti put into each story. At a time when the comic book racks are filled with a multitude of super hero comics, and with more on the way, one can't help but wonder if this fine book will survive. I certainly hope it can, for without E-Man, comics will be a bit less fun to read. I'd like to thank Joe Staton and Nick Cuti for all the help they gave me on this issue. You're great guys!

Magnus, the Robot Fighter ranks as one of the best done sci-fi adventure strips ever to appear in comics. For six years it captured the imaginations of the comic buying public with its outstanding art and writing. Now, with the help of Russ Manning, you'll see how this great series came about and see for the first time the preliminary artwork done on Magnus. I want to thank Russ for taking time out from his busy schedule on Tarzan to answer questions for this issue's interview.

The New Gods! Kirby's dream come true. After years of being second billed on comic book credits (Simon & Kirby - Lee & Kirby) Jack Kirby left Marvel Comics and became artist, writer, and editor of a series he had long in the planning stages. For National Comics he unleashed The New Gods! A scant four years later, when this series ended, both Kirby and much of the comic reading public felt a terrible loss. Bob Cosgrove analyzes this series like it's never been done before and you'll finally see the meeting between Orion and Darkseid on the day called "Last Battle!"

When comics fans talk about humor in comic books, one name almost always comes up. When comics fans talk about Marvel Comics' "King Kull," that same name comes up again. Bruce Patterson presents an interview with one of the nicest people in comics... Marie Severin. I'm sure you'll learn much about Marie's career, that goes back to the days of EC Comics, and a woman's role in comics.

All this, plus a far out strip by former "Judo Master" artist Frank McLaughlin.

Until next time...ENJOY! -MLG

THIS IS SULTIN THE MIGHTY!
OVERLORD OF THE "TIGER CITIES"
HE'S THE CONQUEROR TYPE
GOES ON CAMPAIGNS TO
COLLECT TRIBUTE
READ THIS ISSUE! SNAP TO IT!
NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
JACK KIRBY
'72

E-MAN · MEN

INTERVIEW:

WRITER.....NICOLA CUTI

ARTIST.....JOE STATON

"IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT, GIVEN ETERNITY, ALL THINGS ARE NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT PROBABLE. IN THE EONS OF AGES MARKING THE EXISTENCE OF OUR UNIVERSE, THERE CAME A TIME FOR MAN...AND, SOON AFTERWARDS IN THE NOVA OF AN UNNAMED STAR, THERE CAME A TIME FOR... E-MAN!"

It was also time for one of the most satirical, enjoyable costumed heroes to come along in 20 years! Charlton editor George Wildman had decided to ad a super hero to the Charlton line of comics and the two men responsible for this heroes creation were NICOLA CUTI and JOE STATON.

It isn't often a comic of E-MAN's caliber comes along, so it is with great pride that Comic Crusader presents an interview with its writer/artist team.

(E-MAN AS ENERGY)

The Writer...NICOLA CUTI

C.C. Where and when were you born?

N.C. I was born on October 29, 1944 in Brooklyn, New York.

C.C. When did you first get interested in art/writing?

N.C. I've been drawing all my life (Who hasn't?), but I first became interested in comics through my grandmother who gave me comics to read when I visited her. They were EC comics and even at the tender age of 7 I was impressed with the style of the art and stories. I retold those stories to the kids in my neighborhood and when I ran out of EC tales I began to make up my own. Somehow the stories created a truce between my gang (I was the only Italian-Catholic in an all Jewish gang) and our worst enemies (an all Italian gang). Literature may be the way to a world truce.

C.C. What was your first professionally published work?

N.C. My first story to be published was written while I was serving time in the U.S. Air Force. It was called "GRUB" and was illustrated by Tom Sutton and published by Jim Warren. It was about a group of Space explorers who board a giant Star Ship only to discover, too late, that the ship is a carnivore who hasn't eaten in over a decade.

C.C. You worked at Warren Publications as a writer and contributing editor. How long did you work there? As a contributing editor were your duties more than writing or was that just a title? Are there any stories you'd care to relate about working for Warren?

N.C. I worked for Jim Warren for over a year. The title of contributing editor was given to me by Jim instead of the raise which I had asked for and was no more than a title. Later I was made editor of a project which never came to be. I was given this job mainly to act as mediator between Jim Warren and Wally Wood, who did not see eye to eye on the project. The result of this tenuious relationship ended in a court trial where Woody and I sided against Jim. Since that time we've all become friends again and hopefully will remain such. Jim had given me my first break and Woody has been a friend, teacher and inspiration since the first day I met him.

C.C. You've worked both in underground comix and regular comics. Which media gives you the most satisfaction?

N.C. That's hard to say. The underground gives me total freedom which is a terrible responsibility. At least in regular comics I am restricted and must be creative under confining rules which is quite a challange and I have some fine artists to rely on for weaknesses in my stories, but in the underground I am alone and must sink or swim. However, despite the fact that the regular comics gives me regular employment, there can be no greater satisfaction than being able to point to a piece of work that is entirely my own.

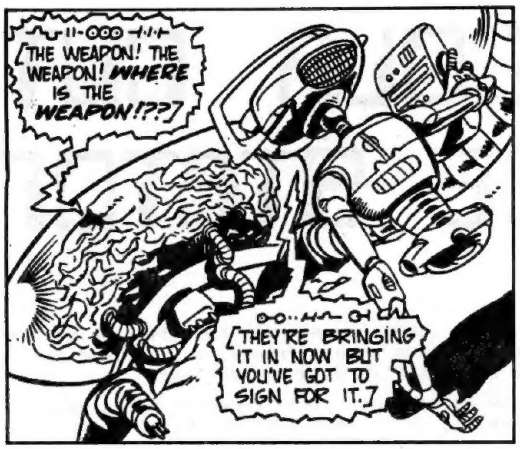
C.C. How did your character Moonchild come about?

N.C. In Time Magazine I read an article which described a Science Fiction heroine called Barbarella and I pictured her to be a voluptuous, little, raven-haired nymph. While on tour in France I finally saw the comic strip of Barbarella and was dissappointed that she did not appear as I had pictured her. I therefore decided to design her myself. From a Playboy centerfold of Gwyne Wong I copped Moonchild's hairdo and when I reached the States I showed her to Wally Wood (she had been published namelessly in a French magazine called "Singulier-Pluriel") and he convinced me to publish her on my own, which I did in Maine. The result was "Moonchild Comics" which was less than an

NOVA KANE HAD JUST FINISHED HER ACT AND WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO A QUIET SUPPER BEFORE RETIRING FOR THE NIGHT.
KLIK
PSST! MISS, HERE IN THE BULB.
WHAZZAT? WHO SAID THAT?
IT'S GOING TO FEEL GOOD TO GET INTO CLOTHES.

(EXOTIC DANCER, NOVA KANE, MEETS E-MAN FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN A RATHER UNUSUAL MANNER.)

(E-MAN'S FIRST FOE...THE BRAIN!)



overwhelming success but it gave me a start.

C.C. You worked on two short lived publications, Web of Horror and Blast. Will you comment on your time with these magazines?

N.C. I wrote the first story in WEB called "Growth" which was illustrated by a then budding young artist, Wayne Howard. Wayne and I became close friends when I moved to Connecticut and has proven that he has the talent to back his early promise. BLAST allowed me to draw Moonchild again, but I consider it to have been my worst effort since I was working under the shadow of Wally Wood and still fighting to keep my own style. The result was a disaster.

C.C. What writers/artists in the comic book field do you most admire?

N.C. Wallace Wood, Berni Wrightson, Wayne Howard, Joe Staton, Will Eisner, Vaughn Bode, Frank Frazetta, Jeff Jones, Ralph Reese, Al Feldstein (as a writer), Archie Goodwin, and Tom Sutton.

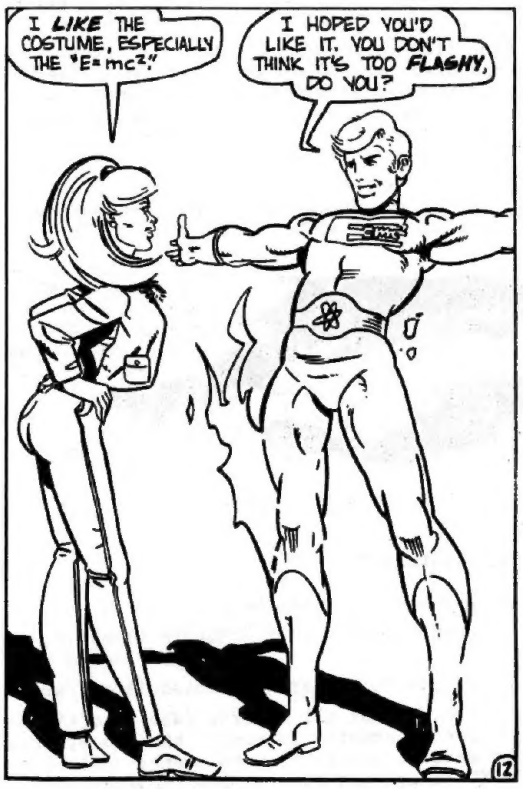
C.C. How did you become connected with Charlton and what does your job as assistant managing editor there entail?

N.C. Wally Wood and I had started a studio together (Wood Studio) in Long Island and later we conned Jack Able (one of the funniest men I've ever met) and the

(A PERFECT BLEND OF ARTISTIC AND WRITTEN HUMOR.)

Syd Shores (one of the nicest guys I've ever met) into joining us. Despite the company and the work I could not stay at the studio because I made only forty a week. Tony Tallerico, who lived nearby and acted as a free lance editor at Charlton told me that Charlton needed an assistant editor of comics and asked if I was interested. I WAS! An interview was set up between myself and George Wildman, the Comic Editor, where I arrived two hours late due to the New York traffic. George hired me anyway and to this day I could not be more pleased. I have been very fortunate in finding encouraging and helpful people in my chosen career of which George is far from the least. It is his progressive thinking and faith in my abilities that have caused many of my stories to see light. As his assistant I confer with him on new projects and do a major part of the production work on our 40 comics. (Despite the glamourous title, the production manager does little more than correct errors in the artwork and dialogue.)

C.C. How and when did the creation of E-Man come about?



(THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF E-MAN IN COSTUME.)

N.C. One day George turned to me and said; "Nick, I've just talked management into trying out super-heroes again. See what you can come up with." I remembered the early Plasticman by Jack Cole and how similar Joe Staton's artwork was to Cole's. However, I wanted a character more powerful than Plas and still have him based on a simple premise. Einstein's famous equation: $E=mc^2$ gave me that premise...a creature who could change from any form of energy into any form of matter.

C.C. You've handled E-Man, so far, in a wonderfully semi-humorous vein...similar to Bill Everett's Hydroman and the way Fawcett's Captain Marvel used to be. Was this your intent from the start and will you be able to keep him in this vein?

N.C. I originally did not intend E-Man to be humorous, but some of the situations I had contrived for him were so outlandish that it became impossible for me to remain serious. I never try to force the humor which I believe to be the failure of many previous attempts at Super-hero Satire, but rather I allow the characters to meet absurd situations with lightness instead of with the seriousness that the situation demands. That is why I feel that James Bond was such a success while so many of the copies were such dismal failures. Joe Staton is responsible for adding comical touches which are not in my script and always with good results, so I give him Carte Blanche with my basic story...well, almost.

C.C. What about Nova Kane? How did she come about?

N.C. I was sick and tired of the bloodless, career girls and goody-goody super heroines who seemed to always be the girlfriends of Super heroes. E-Man's girlfriend was going to be smart, to offset his own naieveness, but she was also going to be sexy as hell.

C.C. Have you had much comment about Nova's job as an exotic dancer? Who thought of that profession?

N.C. Nova's profession was chosen by myself, being a long-time fan of burlesque, and thus far we have received no objections to her trade (remember she only does it part-time since she is nobly working her way through college) from any of our readers...instead we've received applause.

C.C. Is Nova's real name, Katrinka Colchnzski, based on anyone in particular, or is it just made up?

N.C. Katrinka was the name of a character from the "Toonerville Trolly" comic strip of many years ago and the name Colchnzski came from a teacher I had in High School, who first taught me to have pride in my name. It had often been suggested that I change my name, but Colchnzski never changed his, so why should I change mine.

C.C. The Entropy Twins story in E-Man #2 was a beautifully balanced story. It had humor, drama and an emotional ending. Not many stories today can claim that. How did you happen to hit on the idea for the twins?

N.C. From the science book "One, Two, Three...Infinity" by George Gamow. Entropy is the tendency for a closed system toward disorder and I reasoned that extreme order could also be dangerous to a system. I, therefore, created the twins and played them against each other. First they worked in a symbiotic relationship and then, with E-Man as the catalyst, they worked against each other. I tried to milk the idea for all it was worth. So many stories are left hanging because an author could not see all of the possibilities of an idea.

C.C. How has E-Man done sales wise? Will he be with us a while? Also, how has reader response been?

N.C. Reader response has been excellent, both in the form of letters, subscriptions and sales. E-Man's future will depend on an increase in sales, which we expect to occur.

C.C. E-Man has come about at the wain of the current Super hero craze. The wierd/horror titles seem to be in vogue today. Would you say the Super hero trend is on the upswing again? If this is the case, will we be seeing more Super heroes at Charlton?

N.C. We are planning more Super-heroes at Charlton because we don't believe that Super-heroes are on the wain. We think that readers are merely sick of quantity in this field and are searching for quality.

C.C. How much scientific research have you had to do regarding E-Man?

N.C. Science is a hobby of mine and although I am not actively involved in any particular area, I enjoy reading about this subject. When I wrote "The Entropy Twins" I referred to four other books besides the one mentioned before.

C.C. Do you find E-Man compared to Charlton's former hero Capt. Atom at all?

N.C. I never read Capt. Atom.

C.C. Does anything influence your writing on E-Man? Movies, novels etc.

N.C. Everything influences my writing on E-Man and my writing in general. I watch T.V., I go to movies, as often as I can afford to, and I read whenever I find time. By saturating myself with story ideas and analyzing these plots I find out what has been done before and if an idea I have is really unique. Often I get ideas from plots which another author did not use to its full potential. Books on how to write are useless. You learn to write by absorbing thousands of stories, both through actual and vicarious experiences, and then writing your own.

C.C. What is your work day like?

N.C. By day I edit books, read and answer letters concerning fan mail, scripts and artwork and by night I write and draw. Somewhere in between I eat, sleep and go on dates.

C.C. When the originally scheduled story "City in the Sand" was moved from issue #3 to issue #4 to make room for the Energy Crisis book, did that in any way throw your continuity of the E-Man character off?

N.C. No, not really, because each story is complete not a continuity. Even though I do intend to bring back old adversaries, E-Man attacks each new problem as if it were his first and nothing had gone before. Now that the character is established, I have no intention of changing him since it is the strong character in literature who is remembered...Sherlock Holmes, Dracula, Scrooge, etc.

C.C. What does the future hold for you and E-Man?

N.C. If I knew that I'd be telling fortunes instead of writing comics. I only know that I feel grateful to be working for a small, but rapidly rising, company like Charlton, doing what I care about the most.

C.C. Nicola Cuti's writing certainly shows he cares about what he's doing. Now let's take a look at the other half of the team.

(THIS SCENE AND THE ONE ABOVE SHOW THE DRAMATIC ARTISTRY AND STORYTELLING OF THE CUTI-STATON TEAM, AS E-MAN BATTLES THE ENTROPY TWINS IN E-MAN #2.)

The Artist...JOE STATON

*Note: This is not the first time Joe Staton has been interviewed in Comic Crusader. Issue #13 gave an account of his early days and his work on Charlton's now defunct title Primus. Before we get into the E-Man related questions, I'd like to review part of that interview that was conducted by Ron Fortier.

R.F. Joe, in case the FBI gets a hold of this, how about some basic statistics such as where and when you were born?

J.S. I was born 19 January, 1948, at the Army hospital at Ft. Bragg, N.C.; thus making me, in no particular order, a Capricorn (on the cusp of Aquarius — a classically ambiguous combination of signs,) a service brat, and 24 years old at the moment. My father was an Air Force career man and we bounced about from base to base during most of my early days, during which I picked up a love of airplanes and a dislike for staying in one place very long. After my father's death, we moved back to my mother's home in Tennessee, where I spent a rather constricted adolescence.

R.F. What kind of formal education did you acquire?

J.S. I went to college in Murray, Kentucky, where I more or less majored in fine arts and wound up with my bachelor's degree in art. During that time I scrounged up a scholarship from Chapman College in California, to their World Campus Afloat program (the program that was recently going to convert the Queen Elizabeth to its campus) and so spent about four months aboard ship studying in Europe, Africa and South America.

R.F. What encouraged you to try work in comics?

J.S. I had encountered Danny Adkins through the sf fanzines and had, for a short time, corresponded with him, finding out what I might expect if I tried to get into comics. Danny had a pronounced influence on most of my earlier drawings. At any rate, after I got my degree, I left for New York with an eye toward landing comics work. Eventually, I got my first comic assignment -- a short, badly written Steve Skeats story from Warren for CREEPY. (The Amazing Money-Making Wallet....Creepy #42 Nov. '71).

R.F. How did you get along with the notorious Mr. W?

J.S. Warren turned out to be a great deal more trouble than he was worth. I wanted to draw comic books and he thought comics should be filled with slick advertising illustrations. So I eventually got tired of hassling with him and mailed in the story with a bill. He paid me, ran the story and I never went back there.

R.F. How did you finally hook-up with Charlton?

J.S. During an abbreviated honeymoon, we stopped in at Charlton. I got a ghost story to do and Sal Gentile, Charlton's editor at the time, and a very nice man, was sufficently pleased to send me another. Before any of the ghost work had actually been printed, Sal offered me PRIMUS. Things have been pretty solid since then.

R.F. What other artists, besides Dan Adkins, do you admire?

J.S. To be perfectly honest with you, it would be a lot easier to come up with a list of people that I don't like. However, I'll try to nail down a few favorites. Gil Kane is sort of a basic style to respect; especially his early Green Lantern work as inked by Anderson. Jim Aparo and Neal Adams are beautiful in the faces they use. Each of their characters fits his part perfectly. Lou Fine and Jack Davis for their characterizations, too. Russ Manning for his authenticity (his old SEA HUNT comics are the optimum skin diver comics.) Steve Ditko as a really unique visual vocabulary, and a keen sense of design. Joe Kubert as the only guy in the business with an understanding of figure-ground relationships. I told you this would get out of hand... why not just say that I consider Don Heck and Herb Trimpe incompetent, but that I enjoy just about everybody else? Oh, one other fellow who has been remarkably helpful to me is Mike Hinge. (Mike does a lot of covers for AMAZING and FANTASTIC, covers for Lancer and a couple of Time covers.) Mike is a great source of information about tax laws, billing procedures, publishers, shucks—— all the nitty-gritty that keeps your head above water, the things that the art schools don't know about.

Now that some background information has been established, let's look into Joe's E-Man work.

C.C. What were your feelings when you learned of your E-Man assignment?

J.S. I'm afraid that my feelings were a bit mixed. I had missed having a regular character of my own, so I was happy on that score, but from Nick's initial description of his idea for E-Man, I was afraid we were just going into a retread of Captain Atom. Not that I had anything against the Captain, I just thought the idea had been done to death by now. Fortunately, the first script persuaded me that I had little to worry about.

C.C. Did you submit many costume ideas for E-Man?

J.S. No. I just submitted the one presentation drawing completely on spec. That was the drawing that was printed up as the E-Man poster. I did several little sketches on my own, figuring out the costume before I did the presentation drawing. Nick told me to draw whatever sort of costume I wanted, except that he thought a cape would be a bit too much. I agreed, and on working out the sketches, I also decided that a mask would look dumb.

C.C. E-Man looks a bit like the actor Roger Moore. Did his recent James Bond movie, and in fact do movies in general, influence you?

J.S. Yes, on both counts. When I did the presentation drawing of E-Man I used Robert Redford as a suggestion for the face, since I vaguely had in mind the thought of a young cleancut blonde for the hero, but that didn't really work so well...I had lots of trouble keeping his face consistent in the first couple of issues, as you may have noticed, but were too kind to mention...and when I saw the Bond movie--such a lovely junk movie it was--I realized that Moore was very much closer to what I wanted. So I went out and bought his ghosted book on making the Bond movie, so I could study his face a bit more. Of course, as I get on better terms with E-Man himself, his personality asserts itself and the face changes, but basically it's Moore.

And on that subject, Nova was originally modelled on photos of Kim Novack as she appeared in a TV movie "The Third Girl on the Left," I think it was. And for the character of Mauser, Nick told me that he was thinking of introducing a supporting character to figure in a sort of Midnight Cowboy relationship with Alec Tronn. He suggested that he might look something like the Mole (digdigdig...) So starting from that I kept Dustin Hoffman in mind, and Mauser emerged as an amalgam of Ratso Rizzo and the Hoffman character in "Papillon." I cut out faces from newspapers and TV Guide and buy up lots of movie books from the remainder stores, so I can have the faces handy. It's like having Central Casting on call.

And in general, I love motion pictures, and I do my best work when I'm working in front of the TV with an old movie going...preferably something from the forties. And when I manage to get out of the house, it's usually to go to a movie. They're great for not only faces, but nuances of action, settings, atmospherics, camera tricks...lots of things. While I'm drawing, I sometimes get the feeling that my mind is under the control of Michael Curtiz or Raoul Walsh...and there are moments of absolute despair when I'm sure that Roger Corman has seized control.

C.C. Do you prefer doing super hero stories to horror and romance stories?

J.S. Not really. While I prefer doing a regular character to lots of unrelated stories, what I really want to do is science fiction, which, unfortunately, has a pretty bad sales record. But E-Man keeps me pretty well content with all the sf elements that Nick throws into his scripts.

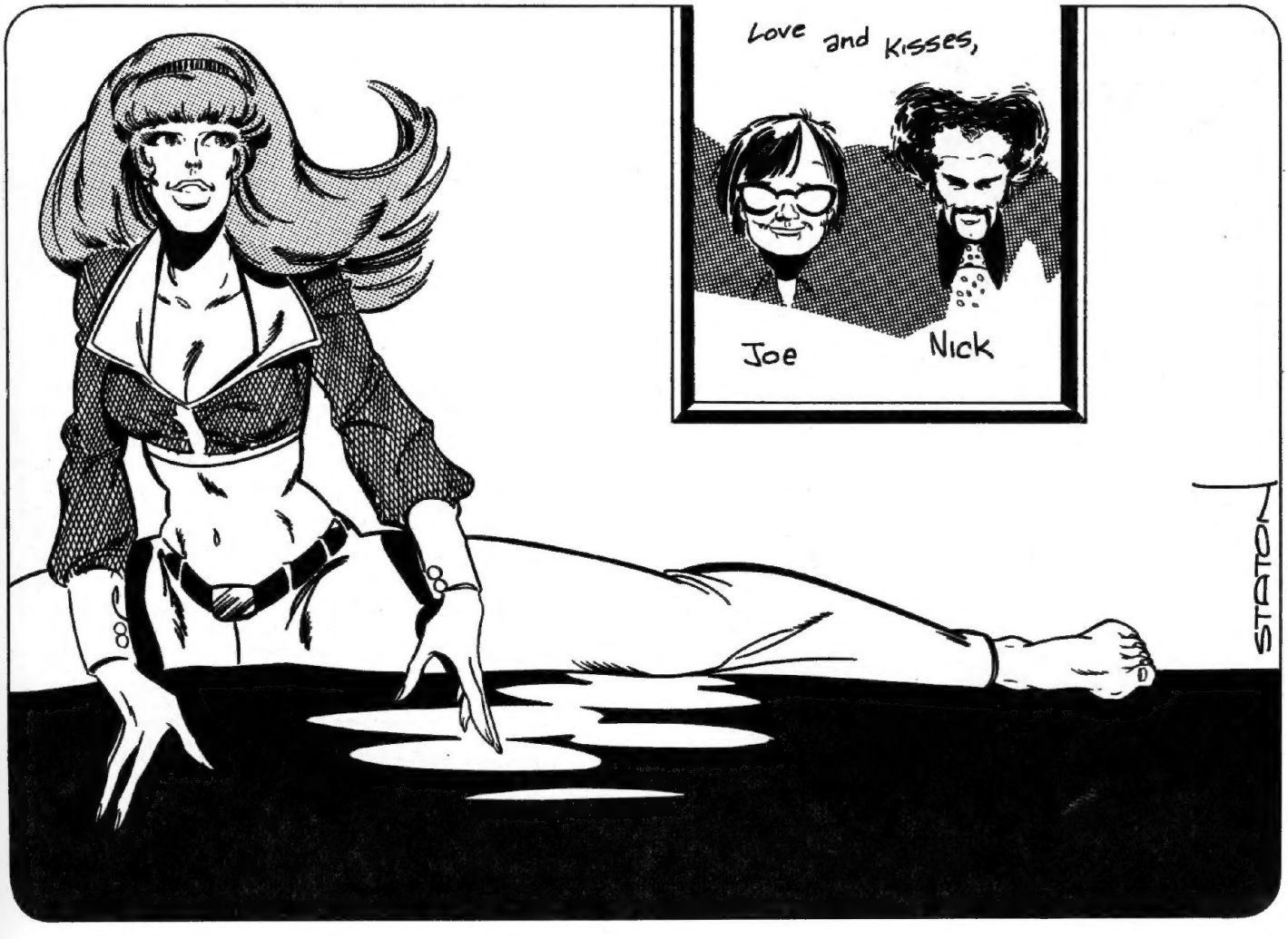
C.C. Has your fan mail increased since you began E-Man?

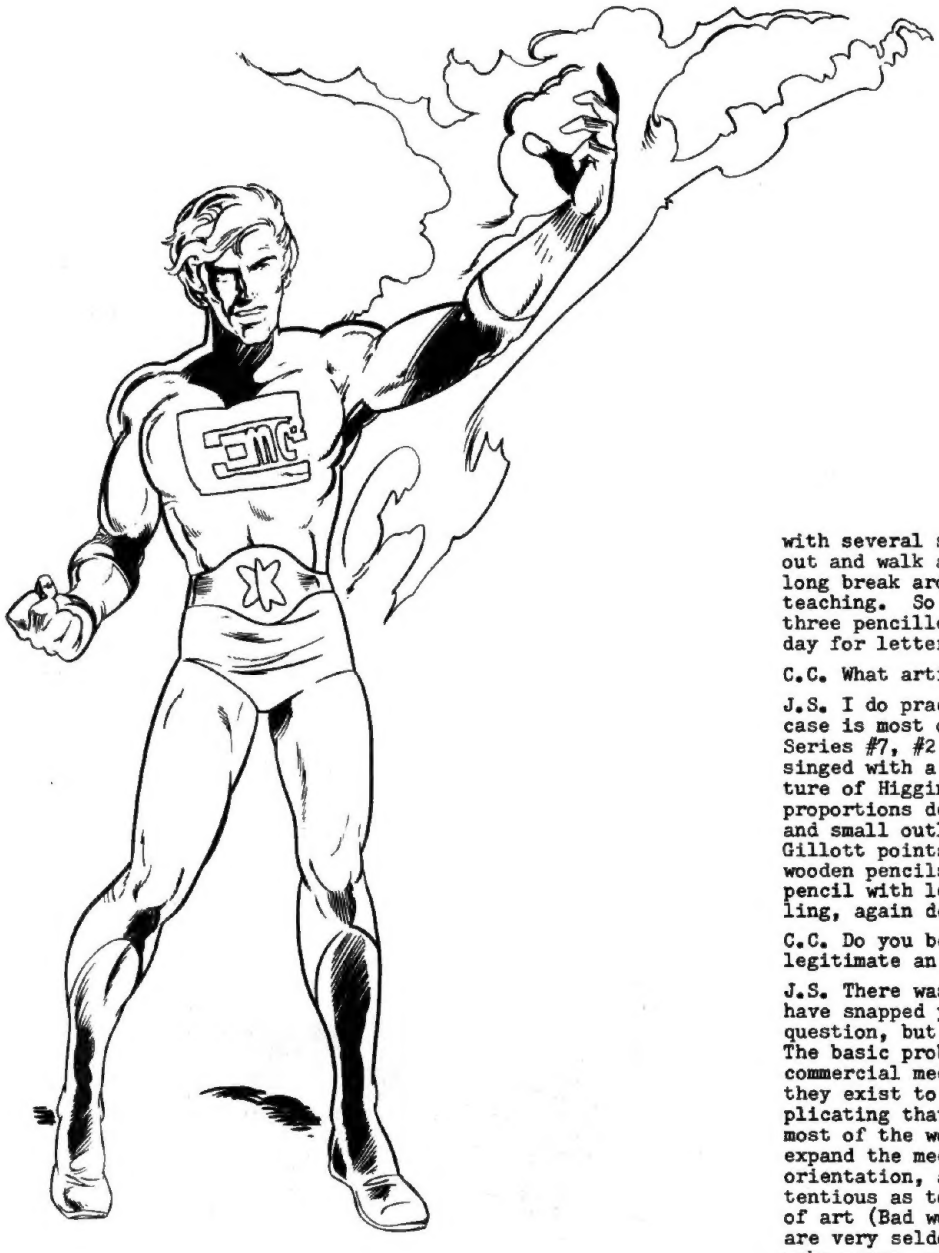
J.S. Considerably.

C.C. At Charlton most of the artists pencil and ink their own work. Do you prefer this arrangement, or would you rather have someone else ink your work?

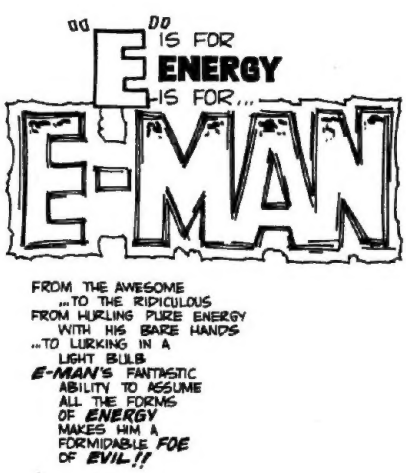
J.S. Yes. I prefer to do all my own work, if possible. In general, it seems that the more people that have a hand in something, the less chance there is of a coherent effect. And on a practical level, it's just easier for me, since I really

(THE BATTERY)





(PRESENTATION DRAWING OF E-MAN)



do most of my drawing with the brush and my pencils are just very general indications of what I want in a panel. I'm almost certain that tightening up the pencils for someone else to ink would destroy the feeling of spontanaeity that I'm after in the strip.

C.C. Do you run into much of a problem with E-Man's chest insignia? Having to draw $E=mc^2$ must get a bit tedious at times.

J.S. It's not so much trouble since the emblem is basically just a rectangle with some squiggles inside it.

C.C. Do you find E-Man easier to work on than Primus, where you had to make the lead characters resemble those on the TV show?

J.S. Well, I had a lot of trouble with Robert Brown's face in PRIMUS, and didn't quite get the hang of it until about the sixth issue, but as I said, I also had a bit of uncertainty figuring out E-Man's face as well. Took about four issues to get it straight. Once I have the face figured out, it's not much trouble to keep drawing it.

C.C. What is your work day like? About how long does it take to pencil and ink a page of E-Man?

J.S. I usually start work around 11:30 in the morning and work until somewhere around midnight, with several short breaks during the day, when I go out and walk around the pond or some such, and a long break around 4:30, when my wife gets in from teaching. So far, E-Man has been done at a rate of three pencilled or three inked pages a day, with one day for lettering.

C.C. What artists tools do you work with basically?

J.S. I do practically all of my inking, which in my case is most of my drawing, with a Winsor-Newton, Series #7, #2 water color brush that's been slightly singed with a match to even the tip; and use a mixture of Higgins and Rapidograph inks, with the proportions determined by the weather. For shadings and small outline work I use Hunt Crow Quill or Gillott points. Since I have a marked dislike for wooden pencils, I use a mechanical draftsman's pencil with leads ranging from H to 2B for pencilling, again depending mainly on the humidity.

C.C. Do you believe that the comic art form is as legitimate an artistic form as any other?

J.S. There was a time not so long ago, when I would have snapped you a quick and certain "yes," to that question, but now I'd have to give it some thought. The basic problem is that comics are primarily a commercial medium, rather than an artistic one... they exist to make money for somebody. And complicating that particular handicap, is the fact that most of the work which I've seen which attempts to expand the medium beyond the strictly money-making orientation, are so self-consciously arty and pretentious as to be self-defeating. Legitimate works of art (Bad word, "art," but let's use it anyway...) are very seldom created by persons setting out to make money, and they are never created by persons setting out to make "Art," with a capital "A." Valid works of art can--and have--turned up in the oddest places, but they are usually the product of an individual possessing uncommon insight stating his or her view of the world in the medium which comes most readily to hand, or in which the individual feels most comfortable. McLuhan possibly to the contrary, it isn't the medium which matters so much as the individual.

C.C. You and Nicola Cuti seem to work very well together. Are his scripts fairly easy to work from and do you have a free hand in the way you depict a character?

J.S. In the past, sometimes the mechanics of Nick's scripts have been a little rough--mostly in the matter of fitting a story to a specific number of pages---which made the pacing of certain sequences a little difficult, but lately he seems to have gotten past that...and that was the only problem I ever really had with any of his stuff. The strength of Nick's stories are his characterizations and dialog. His characters are unusually vivid, which obviously makes it easier for me to visualize them. Usually he gives me free rein with the appearances, and when he thinks a specific appearance is important to the story, he calls up and we talk it over before I draw it. Usually that amounts to nothing more than something like: "Hey, Nick, I'm gonna make Boar really disgusting." "Okay, make him disgusting, but don't make him look like Porky Pig gone wrong. Keep him looking human."

C.C. I enjoyed your "Gods of Mount Olympus" for Quintessence Publications. Would you like to do this type of material for a pro publication, ala Marvel's Thor?

J.S. Well, yes and yes. Yes, I'd like to do this sort of thing pro; and yes, I'd like to do Thor. THE GODS is intended to be a straight retelling of classical myths, while Thor is strictly a superhero with only nominal relationship to the myths. I like them both, but if you're reading GODS as superhero stuff, I'm doing something terribly wrong.

C.C. No, I'm not reading GODS as superhero stuff, but Thor is the closest Gods related material being presented pro today---thus my reason for asking. Also, for you readers who haven't seen a copy of "Gods of Mount Olympus" I highly recomend that you send for a copy to: QUINTESSENCE PUBLICATIONS/ P.O. BOX 5246/ SPOKANE, WA./ 99205. This is a series of 16 page tabloid size papers with adaptations of Greek myths by Johnny Achziger and some beautiful art by Joe Staton. Price per single issue is $1.00 3/ $2.75 6/ $5.00.

C.C. Did you design the E-Man logo, or was that done by someone at Charlton?

J.S. I did it, sort of by accident. I just blocked it in on the presentation drawing and when the character was given the go-ahead by the powers that be, George and Nick decided that they liked it well enough to use as the standing logo, so they paid me for it and blew it up to cover size.

C.C. E-Man stories have been both relevant and pure fantasy. Do you prefer doing fantasy and do you think relevant stories have a place in what is basically escapist entertainment?

J.S. I favor the Elwood P. Dowd school of story-telling. Elwood, you'll recall, was ambling down a perfectly normal street and came upon a perfectly ordinary lamppost at the corner of 18th and Fairfax, except that there was a rather out-of-the-ordinary giant white rabbit named Harvey leaning against that post. I find that I respond best to storylines that are well grounded in mundanity, but which are warped by large elements of fancy. E-Man, for example, lives in the same rather wretched world I do. When he's in New York, there's garbage in the streets, he has to step over sleeping drunks, the phones don't work, but the rates go up anyway. It's a very real world he inhabits, and I would forfeit any claim to artistic integrity if I drew it any other way than I do, but in that world he runs into things that don't happen in my world... giant brains from outer space, energy stealing robots, weird stuff made remarkable by being grounded in grubby reality. I think "relevant" bits (or rather than relevant, we say that E-Man is "current..." Blame Cuti for that, not me.) can be good plot pegs for fantasy, and that fantasy entirely divorced from relevance too often degenerates into saccharine slush, but that when relevancy gets the upper hand, you get such supremely inane episodes as Green Lantern in the coal mines...arrrgh. The best stories are always located somewhere around 18th and Fairfax.

C.C. Your artistic range on E-Man has been outstanding. You've depicted humor, drama and a wee bit of sex. Your work now seems different than your early work. Have you found that your approach to comic art has changed much since you first began?

J.S. Of course. When I first began, I had trouble just getting control of my tools, so the early work is sort of tentative, and often unpleasantly tight. Then as I got command of the mechanics, I started to concentrate on characters, and then on layouts. Usually, when I think I've gotten to the point where I can do one thing pretty well, I'll start doing something else. That doesn't do much good in terms of product identity, but it does serve to keep the job interesting.

C.C. Nicola Cuti thinks your art is reminiscent of Jack Cole's on Plastic Man. Do you concur?

J.S. Just on the most superficial level, there probably isn't that much similarity. My characters don't look all that much like Cole's, and I don't break down stories the way he did. But once you get past the superficials, down to seeing the way he looked at the world, and the way he felt for his characters, I find a tremendous sense of kinship with his work.

C.C. Have any artists in particular influenced your work?

J.S. I'd say that every bit of visual work I've ever seen has influenced the way I work. Whenever I try to come up with a list of people, it comes out different and gets longer every time. I think the primary thing to consider is that I'm as much influenced by Reginald Marsh and Caroll Reed as by Wally Wood and Will Eisner.

C.C. Some artists dislike doing covers. What are your feelings about doing E-Man covers?

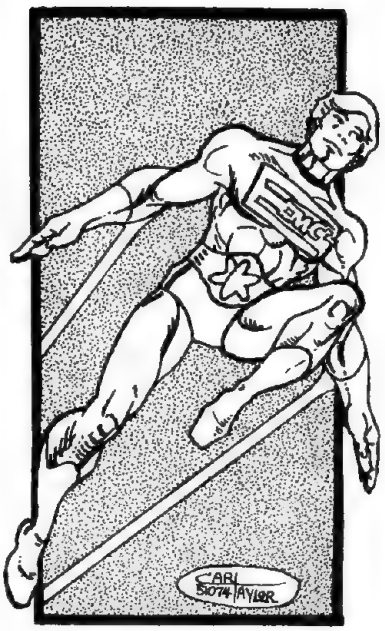
J.S. Sort of mixed. I like the idea of doing covers, but I'm not generally all that satisfied with my results. I really try very hard to avoid the run-of-the-mill comic cover with the medium shot of figures in funny suits fighting, which strikes me as awfully trite by now, but in avoiding that, I all too often wind up with a static cover, which may be a nice composition, but which doesn't turn the twelve-year-olds on very much. There's a cover coming up for the "City Swallower" issue of E-Man, which I like very much.

C.C. Did you also create the coloring of E-Man's costume?

J.S. No. Someone at the Charlton office did that. It would never have occurred to me to color the suit orange, but it looks fine.

Interview by Martin L. Greim

Art by Joe Staton and Carl Taylor



(ABOVE: E-MAN BY CARL TAYLOR
BELOW: MAUSER'S ASSESSMENT OF NOVA KANE. AND HE'S RIGHT! NOVA IS A REAL NICE GIRL!)

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MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER

4000 A.D.

Art by: MIKE ROYER

© K.K. Publications, Inc. 1974

MAGNUS YEAR 9000 A.D.

MANNING YEAR 1979 A.D.

PREFACE:

"RUSS MANNING & MAGNUS - AN APPRECIATION"

by BOB COSGROVE

It used to strike me as ironic that Russ Manning, that romanticist, that master of the liquid line, and Alex Toth, the slashing, jagged, modernist alternated in illustrating the 77 Sunset Strip comic for Gold Key; today, it merely seems appropriate. For, whatever their differences, both have important things in common - they are each perfectionists, men with exciting individual styles with an eye toward telling the story with a minimum of frills.

I think the outstanding characteristic of Manning's artwork is its fusion of romanticism with tremendous control. It combines handsome men and beautiful women, exotic locales and heroic battles, with a control of the brush that borders on slickness, and an economy of design that approaches austerity. Such an approach has its limitations; when a Russ Manning character gets dirty, he is never nearly so dirty as a Steve Ditko bum. Russ Manning characters do not grapple with the explosive force of Jack Kirby's, nor do they move through the rich textured jungles of Joe Kubert. For Russ Manning's world is a clean one; he excels in rendering shining metals and beautiful people. Rarely does a Russ Manning character enter the shadows of an Eisner, or a Caniff, for his world is a well-lit one.

However, Manning's uncanny consistency and controlled line does not diminish his romanticism, but heightens it. In writing plays, Yeats claimed the passion he created came from the fact that the fact that the speakers were restraining violence or madness - and Manning has something of that, in his action scenes. Moreover, Manning's tight control allows him to slip into naturalistic scenes without jarring the reader - who could picture Burne Hogarth drawing Magnus and Leeja having a snow ball fight as depicted in Magnus #8?

As a designer, Manning can be as economical as Toth, but most often he prefers to play detail against simplicity - ornate, carved columns alternate with stark white walls. Patterned hats and cushions play against simple robed figures. The viewpoint is heroic--as much as two-thirds of the time, the reader finds the horizon line in the bottom third of the panel, as he gazes upward at the heroic form of Magnus, or the delicious figure of Leeja, in her incredibly exotic, all-but-diaphanous nightgown. Rarely is Manning "cinematic," never is he ostentatious - special effects and spectacular panels do not distract the reader from his pursuit of the story. Only when he returns--as one always must with a Manning story, does he linger to admire the shining cities, the glittering costumes, the beautiful brush work that forms the auburn hair of Leeja Clane.

Like the best of the comics men - Raymond-Foster-Caniff-Kirby-Eisner - Russ Manning is both a writer and artist. He does not merely illustrate the words of other men, but creates a unity of words and pictures that blend into stories as tightly constructed as the best of Manning's panels. Books of the caliber of Magnus derive not merely from talent, but from a distinctive conception of a possible reality. The world of Magnus - with its talking dogs and neo-animals, undersea food supplies and weather control machines, futuristic opulence and eternal poverty is generously conceived, and faithfully executed.

It may be that before his career is over, Russ

Manning will be hailed as the definitive artist of Tarzan, and there are worse fates than to be compared with St.John, Frazetta, Foster, and Hogarth; but I believe that Manning's finest achievement to date is MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER.

Leeja Clane

Back in 1964, when "The Comic Reader" was the official newsletter of The Academy of Comic Book Fans & Collectors and was published by Glen Johnson, fan John McGeehan wrote Russ Manning about the creation of Magnus, Robot Fighter and received a reply that was published in issue #28 of that publication. Since the information contained in that article is pertinent to the Russ Manning interview conducted by Comic Crusader, we are reprinting it here for your edification.

"THE ORIGIN OF MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER"

by RUSSELL G. MANNING

In March, 1962 Jack Taylor, Art Director, Whitman Pub. Co., mentioned in passing, that the company was considering a comic book with the story laid in 4,000 A.D., and that I was being considered as the illustrator. Intrigued, I went to Chase Craig's office and asked about it.

Chase showed me a letter he had sent to the head office and various department heads. I do not know how much discussion Chase had had with the others prior to his letter, but the letter seemed to imply that the origin of the idea was Chase's. The points that Chase's letter marked were: That comic book readers seem to be buying subjects not possible (because of cost, etc.) on TV. 4000 A.D. would be science-fiction adventure, ala "Jetsons", only realistic. Robots would have become the master race, subordinating man. The hero would be human, would lead the resistance, would find literature, etc., from the 20th century that would inspire the humans. The letter was dated February 26, 1962.

After discussing the idea, Chase stated that they had just started thinking about the book, and hadn't assigned a writer. I told him of my reading in science-fiction, and asked to be allowed to make a stab at it. He handed me the above-mentioned letter, and the script for the movie that had just been made of H.G. Wells' TIME MACHINE. Whitman had done the comic book adaptation of that movie (illoed by Al Toth), and Chase stated that that format was along the lines he had been considering, only with Robots. I said that my first impression would be to make the 4000 A.D. hero a TARZAN of the future...man at his simplest. Chase said it sounded good and to 'op to it! I headed for the nearest beer and relaxed in a glow of euphoria...a whole, brand-new hero and world to create...almost carte blanc! MAN!

Shortly, I submitted a two page layout, describing the world of 4000 A.D., and the hero, as I pictured and thought of them. I personally rejected the world as TIME MACHINE showed it...too wishy-washy... and instead, pictured it much as the comic book shows it now. But the hero, still a Tarzan of the future, had a gimmick...a great stone hammer, slung at his waist, which he used to overpower robots. Had THOR (Marvel) been originated then? At any rate, I hadn't seen it at that time. The names I submitted were HAMMER...MANN...and MAGNUS (this latter inspired mostly by MAXIMUS, in Mary Perkins, ON STAGE strip). Chase, and his assistant, Zetta DeVoe, went over my layout, made suggestions and changes, and chose MAGNUS as the new hero's name.

I then submitted a synopsis for a 27 page script, which Chase, Zetta and I, in conference, went over thoroughly. I was given the go-ahead to write the actual script, and did so. Again, Chase and Zetta tore into it, and made suggestions that, when rewritten into the script, did wonders for it. Then came the day when they said it was ready for illustration.

I had submitted costume and character studies to Chase, and these boiled down to two...a pair of trunks, red, of the material his whole suit is now, and a pair of soles that stuck to the bottom of his feet (no straps), and nothing else.

The second costume was a sleeveless jump-suit like everyone else wears in the book. We chose the trunks, as being more distinctive and simple. I then illoed the whole 27 pages, with Magnus in a pair of metal-mesh trunks and strapless sandals.

The artwork went back east, and bounced back with a request to put some clothes on the guy. Tarzan could go around bare-chested because of the Jungle (I guess), but not Magnus! Among the designs for costume I then submitted was the one Magnus now wears EXCEPT that I had indicated blue-black boots. Obviously, the red suit was the one chosen, and I went through the entire artwork, putting Magnus into ceramic-durium. In the margin of the first page artwork, I made color notes to the colorist, calling for red on the suit, red-brown on his hair...and, figuring that no colorist needed a color note to know that boots are either blue-black, or dark brown, I made no suggestions for boot color. Hence...no boot color!

Ah, yes, I see I forgot the hammer! In writing the synopsis, I discussed the new hero with Dodie, wife, help-mate, and she suggested doing away with the kookie hammer, and maybe having him karate the robots, or leap up on their shoulders and UNSCREW their heads! I laughed deprecatingly at the unscrew bit, and sneakily adopted her superb "bare hand against robot metal" idea...and must certainly give her credit for what I feel is surely one of the deepest felt reasons for reader association with the Robot Fighter.

I suspect that an absolutely one-man creation is an extreme rarity, and certainly Magnus is not one of the items...quite a number of us worked to hone Magnus into the more or less consistent fellow he is. One more person also added a fine bit...

THE ART DEPICTED BELOW, BY RUSS MANNING, IS THE SE
FOR THE COSTUME OF MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER. THE JUN
TO BE MUCH SHORTER.

ECOND OF THE TWO ORIGINAL CONCEPTS SUBMITTED TO CHASE CRAIG
MP-SUIT WAS TO BE RED AND, AS YOU CAN SEE, LEEJA'S HAIR WAS

Jess Marsh, at a dinner party one evening, suggested the train of thought that led to the human-brain computer in the first book. And still unknown: the name of the colorist who digs white boots!

When Bob Cosgrove and I decided to do an article on MAGNUS, we approached Russ Manning for an interview that would enhance the piece you've just read. He graciously consented and provided us with answers to the following questions.

INTERVIEW:

C.C. If I could begin with a few questions on your own statement on Magnus's creation....At the time you first contacted Chase Craig about the Magnus book, how fully developed was the Magnus concept?

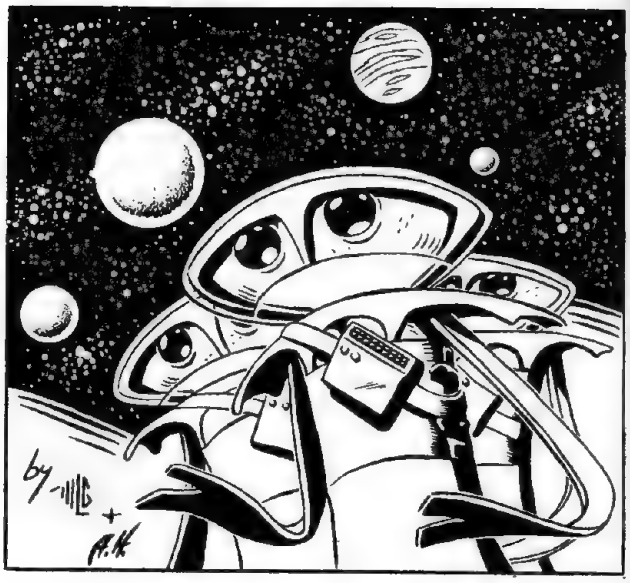
R.M. As I stated in my account of Magnus's conception years ago in Glenn Johnson's newszine, Chase Craig (Editor, Western Publishing Co.) gave me a copy of a letter he had written, dated Feb. 1962, setting forth his idea for a comic book dealing with 4,000 A.D. This letter was the foundation for Magnus. When Chase read my account in Glenn's fanzine, his only comment was to state that the ideas in the letter were his own. I had stated in the article that the letter implied the ideas were Chase's...a distinction I had made because of my uncertainty...which Chase completely removed.

Besides noting some reasons for doing such a comic book, which I feel remain the company's private business, Chase's letter makes the following points about the proposed 4,000 A.D. mag:

It would be a "realistic" science-fiction adventure.
Mankind has become subordinate, virtually enslaved, by a race of mechanical robot men.
Originally created by humans, the robots improved themselves, becoming the master race.
There would be a "chief" robot...a robot-to-end-all-robots...practically invincible.
The hero would be a human who would resist, who finds inspiration in the literature and lives of the past (Washington, Lincoln, etc.)

As you can see, the basic tenets of Magnus are all there. The major change that I affected, I believe, was the alteration of the background of the robot threat; from simple "bad-guy" domination, to a more sophisticated "too much reliance on machines."

Xyrkol



The Aliens

Chase's plan to use robot villains remained...but I suggested the necessity of most of the robot evilness being the result of HUMAN perversion of them...or some other logical cause. Robots, being machines, would logically be no more capable of evil than this typewriter...but the human manipulating it is. This more realistic background for the stories helped their success, I'm sure. However, the man-versus-machine thrust of the comic was Chase's idea...and this is surely the main reason the comic appealed to so many people at that time.

C.C. Had any other artists than yourself expressed interest in the strip?

R.M. I never heard of any. Of course, I heard about the possibility of the comic being done, very early in its gestation, and got in on the ground floor...writing and drawing it into creation.

C.C. Your initiative in seeking the assignment suggests a personal interest in the Science Fiction genre. Is this true, and if so, were any SF books particularly influential in developing Magnus? The robots are often compared with Asimov's. One fellow, I recall, even wrote in and took you to task because your Robots did not obey Asimov's three Robotic Laws.

R.M. I was very heavily into reading SF and Fantasy all through high school and Jr. College (the 1940's); surely one of the very best periods for that literature. I still have all the Astoundings and most of the other pulps I bought at the time...and reread many while creating and working on Magnus. Asimov and Van Vogt were, and are, very high on any list of writers germinal to all SF, including my own.

C.C. Do you have a favorite story of the tales you wrote?

R.M. Not really. But there are several I feel are sub-standard, including the last couple I did.

C.C. Concerning that very first story, there seemed to be a degree of control on the part of the robots, and an attitude of docility among the humans, that was unmatched in all of the subsequent ones. How did this come about?

R.M. The first book incorporated more of Chase's original wishes for the series, as well as the ideas he and I worked out together, than did any of the following issues. Of course, other writers did numbers 2,3,4, and so forth, and while both Chase and I worked their stories over, trying for consistency, the basic concept became progressively generalized and easier for other writers to grasp. Then, when the comic book took off in popularity, the refinements didn't seem so important.

C.C. There seemed to be an attempt on the part of the Magnus staff to explore Magnus's world - with undersea, Arctic, and other exotic sets. I wonder if this was by editorial design or happy accident,

and if the former, if you ever sat down and wrote/sketched out a comprehensive outline of the world in 4,000 A.D.?

R.M. If I had written all of the stories, the locale probably would have remained North Am and/or space...since the possibilities inherent in just those two areas would never have been exhausted. Other writers brought in the other locales... possibly to avoid the necessity of really understanding North Am, and using it within the perimeters of its original conception. I submitted several pages of written material on Magnus and North Am, before writing the first book; which, with Chase's ideas, "set" the North Am and Magnus milieu.

C.C. Somewhat more vague was the political structure of the future. Was it as you imagined it?

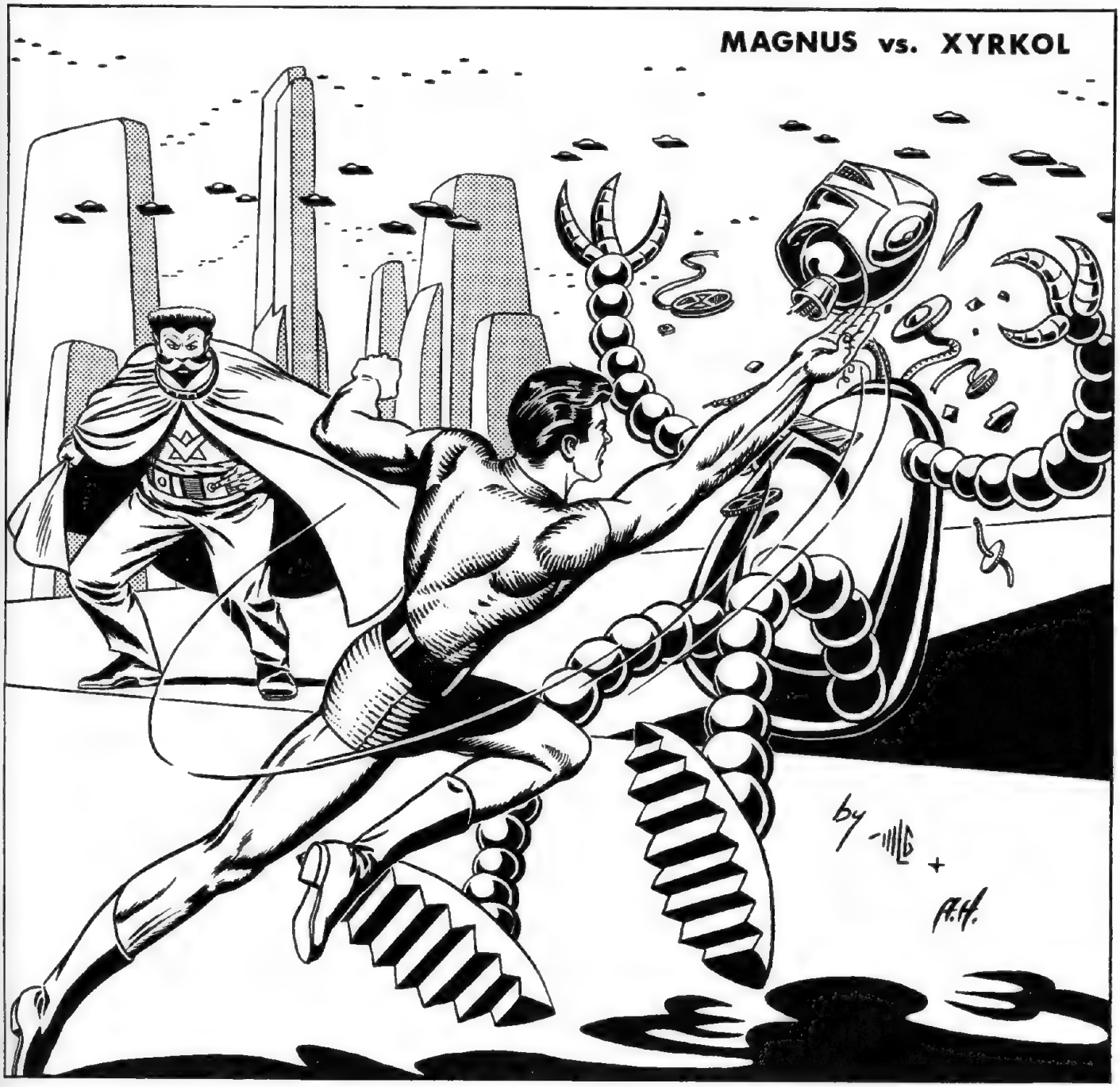
R.M. I'm a pragmatist in politics...if it works, use it, and ignore the label. Chase, however, excercised firm control over political content in the Magnus comic. My feeling is that Chase believed in the absolute MINIMUM of control of humans by ANY governmental bodies or workings. I don't feel that this particular editing in any way reduced the entertainment qualities of Magnus... nor its educational aspects.

C.C. In Magnus #21 (your last issue), Dr. Laszlo Noel recites an incantation to create an Ecto-Rob. The incantation was right out of H.P. Lovecraft. Are you a reader of Lovecraft?

R.M. In my opinion, Magnus #21 isn't a particularly good comic book...possibly because I tried to cram too much into it. Possibly the strain of shifting gears back and forth from Magnus to Tarzan had become too great...and I was personally seeking some magical help with deadlines! Of course I had read Lovecraft, and his unique, strong mythos made a great impression on me. Noel's incantation is a tribute to H.P.L.

C.C. Were you often asked to revise scripts, or make changes in artwork while working on Magnus, or were any changes made without your knowledge?

R.M. Most of Chase's editing of my stories was done on the synopsis submitted before starting on the script. Chase (like all editors?) wanted synopsises no longer than two pages, double-spaced. Mine went on for eight or ten pages, giving every detail...with just that much more chance for the editor to find something wrong. The most extreme



editing...also the most instructive...was for "Havoc At Weather-Control" (Magnus #8). Both Chase and his assistant, Zetta DeVoe, felt I had tried to put too many unnecessary elements into it (including Cat People from Space!) and made several other suggestions that truly helped the story. There was some difficulty in doing the early issues of Magnus because neither Chase nor Zetta had read much Science-Fiction, seemingly having derived their knowledge of the field from TV and the movies (very limited in good SF in 1962, of course). When letters began pouring in praising the quality and SF in Magnus, Chase realized that my approach was acceptable to comic book buyers; and gave me a much freer hand with the stories I wrote...and carte blanche to rework the scripts of other writers when I felt it was necessary. Changes in either story or art AFTER I submitted them were extremely rare.

This is a good time to give Carl Barks the credit due him for the success of Magnus. What?? Carl Barks!? Yep! The number of letters commenting on Dell comic books had always been on the light side until Magnus! And with Magnus, they suddenly POURED in! Then, concurrently, I heard at Western Publishing's office, that Carl Barks had commented very favorably to them about Magnus. Barks had always been highly regarded at Western Pub. Co., as he has with fandom, and his approval apparently put the final okay on Magnus and the way I was handling it.

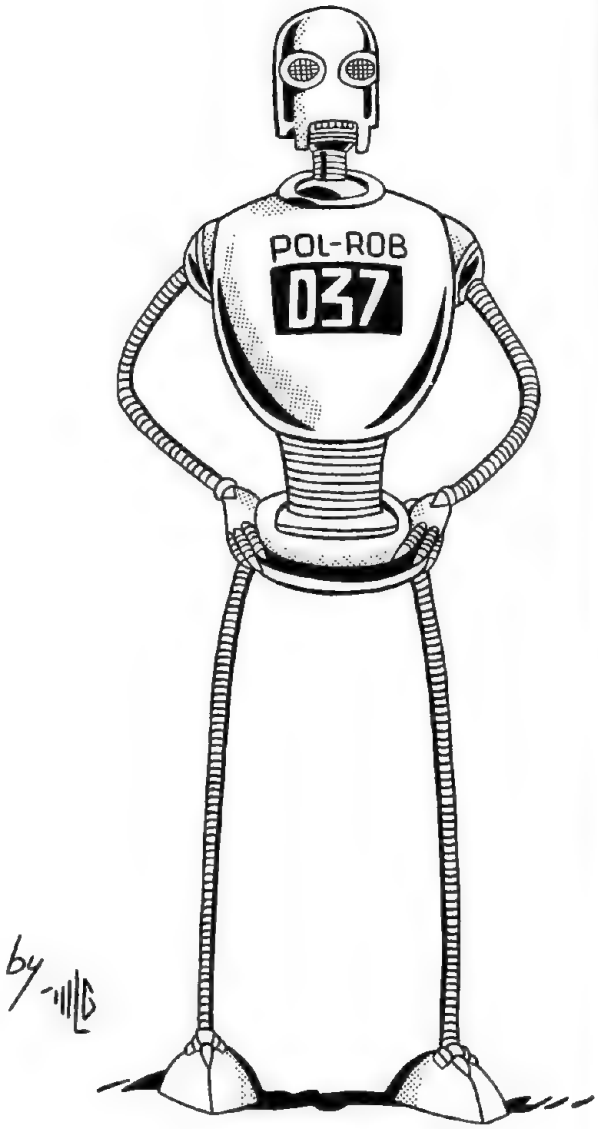
As to Chase, himself...I consider my years working under and with him very enjoyable and beneficial. His knowledge and feel for storytelling were strong and straightforward, admirably suited to the direction Dell and Gold Key wanted their comics to take. Others complained of his distaste for experimentialism; but I found that anything and everything was acceptable to Chase, as long as the total story and its effective telling remained great in emphasis than any tricks or gimmicks.

C.C. It is known that Mike Royer assisted you on several stories. Did anyone else work with you, and could you describe the role Mike played?

R.M. I commented favorably to Caz (Editor of ERBdom) about some fan art of Mike's. Caz relayed same to Mike, and after some correspondence between Mike and myself, he and his family moved to Southern California from Oregon in 1965. Mike assisted me part-time, while supporting his family in non-art jobs. He learned and improved rapidly to the point where he was making his entire living at art.

C.C. The usual question, but one that's always of interest to fans - how did you proceed in drawing the story? Is there a central concept in your approach to story telling?

R.M. I don't believe that I had, nor have now, any logical,



A Manning Robot

reasonable approach to storytelling. Since my talents do not seem to include any particular analytical ability, I can only put down what interests or pleases me; also appeals to enough buyers to make me a living. I must admit, though, that I have not studied WRITING with the diligence that I gave to illustration. To my possible regret.

C.C. Do you credit any particular artists with influencing you in general?

R.M. Beyond the obvious fact that I've studied, admired and absorbed every great creator in the graphic story field, as well as in fine art and literature in general, I'm proud to acknowledge the inspiration that Warren Tufts gave me when I discovered his LANCE comicstrip...and later when he did comic books for Western Pub. Co. My work changed, for the better, I'm sure, immediately after his first Dell comic books appeared. In all honesty, Tuft's later work did not sustain that initial impact on me, and I'm not all certain, now, that he belonged in comic books. But his touch was so accurate and refined, that mine seemed disgustingly coarse by comparison...and I tried to improve in the direction of accuracy in drawing, rather than in the direction of, say: cartooning (a la Chester Gould)...or romanticism (a la St. John or Frazetta).

I remember no direct influence on me in the Magnus work...by 1963 I felt pretty competent and capable of consistency...but one artistic influence was R. Gobson Jones (Astounding), in the shapes of North Am skyscrapers.

C.C. Did designing new Robots for Magnus ever get to be a problem?

Mekman

R.M. No. Only great fun.

C.C. You seemed reluctant to abandom Leeja's first hair-style, and her fantastically sexy black dress, and I noticed you always returned to them. Was this for reader identification purposes or did you like them too?

R.M. Like I said, I draw what pleases me as often as possible. Leeja changed outfits only often enough to underscore her femininity. I once tried to put Magnus in futuristic evening clothes...for the dance scenes in #16 and #18, but didn't recognize him. So he NEVER changed his ceramic-durium.

C.C. Leeja has to rank as one of the most beautiful heroines in comics. Can you tell us something of the creation of Magnus's leading lady?

R.M. Leeja's name was suggested by "Leej" (if I remember rightly) in a A.E. Van Vogt "Linn" story. I believe the universal image of a pure virginal heroine is as a long-haired blonde (Eve, Jane, Aleta, Becky Thatcher, etc.)...so Leeja could not have been otherwise. Weirdly enough, in real life, the reverse seems to be true.

C.C. How did the Aliens backup feature come about?

R.M. After finishing the first Magnus story, I was asked to write and draw a non-hero four-pager, with a future setting. The deadline was very tight, so I used a concept I'd been strongly impressed with when reading Leinster's version in the '40's. So, too, was someone at E.C. Evidently Chase liked the concept enough to ask the writers of Magnus #2 to use the same setting and characters. Each episode was complete in itself until I returned to writing it in Magnus #5. The Aliens occurs in the same future time-stream as does Magnus, but whether before or after the Robot Fighter, I never decided. The year 4,000 A.D. is, in my opinion, not a reasonable date for the North Am and milieu I created. 2,200 A.D. would seem more accurate, considering the present rate of development toward such a state.

C.C. Do you recall who came up with the idea of Magnus's robot speech receptor? The device that enabled Magnus to overhear robot nonethereal speech.

R.M. My original synopsis laying out Magnus and North Am is packed away where it is too difficult to check, but since the receptor was used in the very first story, it had to be my idea. This type of specific scientific concept (non-ethereal speech, etc.) was not, and is not, the kind of thing Chase comes up with.

C.C. Did Magnus pose any special artistic or writing challenges which Tarzan does not?

R.M. Are you kidding? Tarzan is a complete, already conceived world...while every blessed button, doorway, speech pattern, hair-do...even manner of thinking...has to be CREATED in Magnus. Magnus was... and still would be...an infinitely more difficult, time-consuming creative effort.

C.C. A couple of your returning villains were Iyrkol, Mekman, and Mal-Ev-6. Was their return dictated by the muse, reader response, or sales charts?

R.M. Iyrkol and Mekman were created by other writers ...but I found them interesting enough to bring them back when I needed villain types. One of my greatest difficulties is conceiving these stereotyped "bad-guys". To me, there are no bad-guys...just people with problems who have been allowed to get out of control.

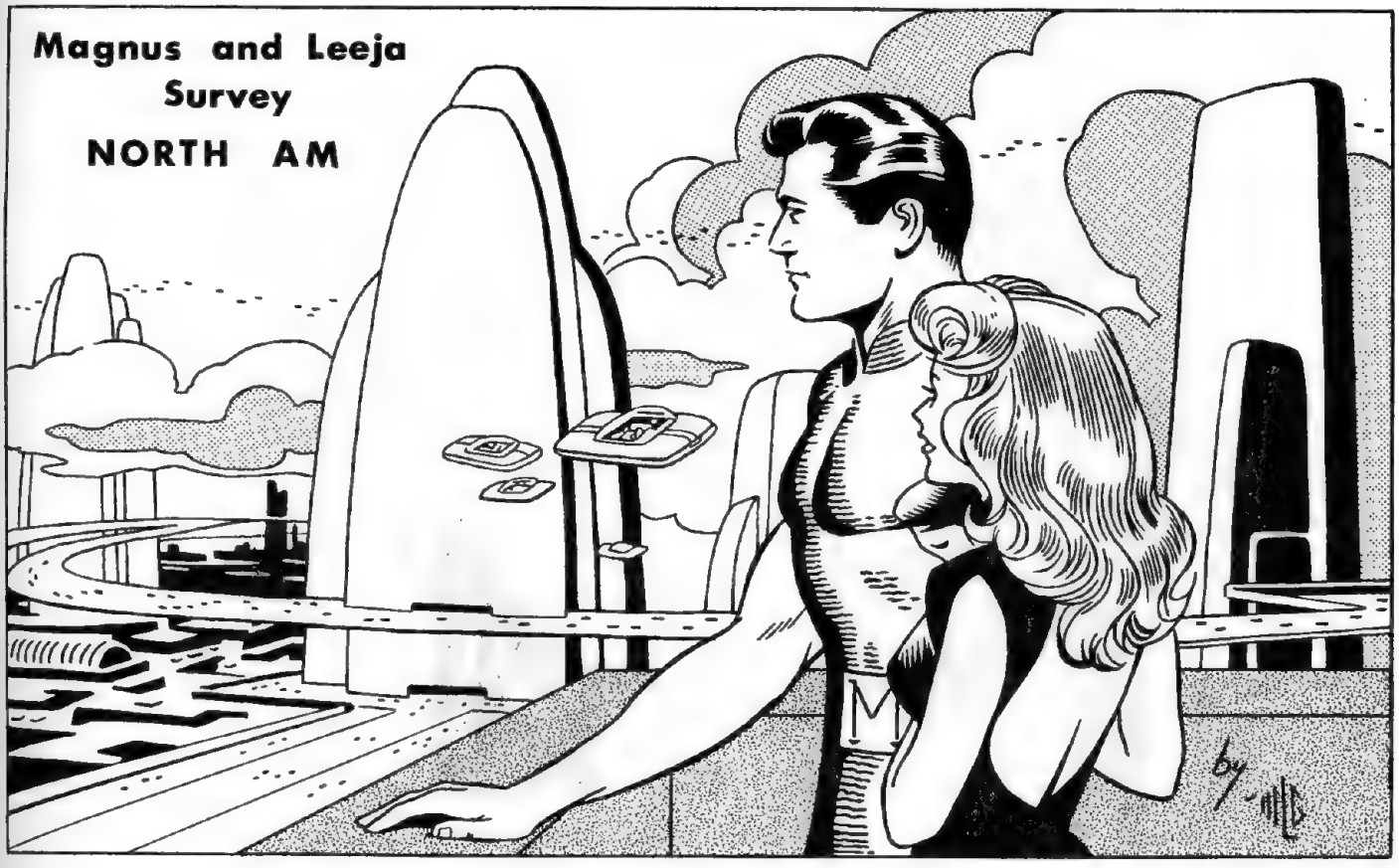
C.C. Once at a New York Comic Convention, I saw a pen and ink version of the cover to Magnus #7. Did you do a detailed drawing, for the cover painter to work from, on every issue...and who painted those covers?

R.M. The only pen/ink cover of the original first editions of Magnus was for #5. The Magnus #7 with pen/ink cover is a reprint of #7, for which Mike Royer was assigned to render a pen/ink version of the original painted cover. I designed, usually in pencil, all of the covers. My roughs were sent to Western Pub. Co.'s New York office where the painted cover was done from my design. I was never told the painter's name.

C.C. A further question on covers...All the covers except #5's were paintings. Was there any reason for that one cover being in pen and ink?

R.M. The pen/ink cover for #5 was done because so many fans wrote in blasting the strange non-Magnuses on the painted covers (black boots, etc.). So Chase decided to humor them, and based on the success of the pen/ink pinup on the back cover of #4, he assigned doing a pen/ink cover for #5 to me. Here was a unique opportunity to do something great and change Gold Key's traditional cover look. I blew it.

C.C. Magnus was discontinued shortly after you left. How much did your departure have to do with this?



R.M. Hard to say. Didn't the entire super-hero fad begin to fade about that time? It is impossible for me to be objective about how my creation was handled after I left it, so I cannot judge whether the quality changed under different writers and artists...or whether that change affected or caused the eventual demise. Perhaps the reprinting of the Magnus issues I worked on, and no others, would indicate that the readers prefer my work...or maybe only that the editor who chooses the reprints does. Quen sabe?

C.C. Is there any chance you might ever return to Magnus?

R.M. Again, quen sabe? It would have to pay commensurate with the effort. I would have no objection to returning to Magnus...there is vast unturned ground there.

C.C. In terms of your own personal satisfaction, how did Magnus compare with Tarzan?

R.M. No real difference. Both are equal in being completely challenging, completely satisfying to my creating urges.

C.C. Besides the first Aliens story, where any others adaptations?

R.M. None of the other Aliens stories I did are adaptations, though SF buffs will recognize the general framework in which I worked.

C.C. In The Aliens episode "A Case of Nerves" in Magnus #6, you have a number of panels where the Hypatomic vibrations are shown purely through the use of color. Was this your idea and did you do the coloring?

R.M. The idea and coloring are mine.

C.C. Did you ever attempt to moralize in Magnus, aside from the "man is getting soft" bit?

R.M. No, though one could make the point that every true hero story is a moralization.

C.C. In regard to Magnus's robot smashes...did you have any knowledge of karate?

R.M. No...and I'm afraid Magnus's robot smashes show less than impressive knowledge of karate. As an aside, I cannot agree with Richard Corben's superb take-off on Magnus (Slow Death #4), stating that the robot-fighter would HAVE to have metal in his arm. Of course, by 2,200 or 4,000 A.D. metalic bone-replacements could be routine...but I work on the principle that humans can do ANYTHING THEY BELIEVE THEY CAN DO. This would be the basic thrust of 1A's training...and the future of humanity MUST involve greater knowledge and use of self-psyching, etc.

C.C. Do you know how Magnus did sales wise?

R.M. I had trouble finding the comic. But Western Pub. Co. was and is very secretive with that type of info... so I have no reports on distribution to pass on.

As a postscript, let me tell you that I have suggested to Chase that they commission me to do hardcover books on Magnus similar to the ones I'm doing now on Tarzan. To date, Western Pub. Co. has not seen the value in my proposal...but it <u>is</u> a little ahead of its time...and that company <u>is</u> very conservative...

*NOTE: It is interesting to note some of the more familiar fan names connected with Magnus. RICHARD KYLE, for instance. Quote from Russ Manning: "Richard Kyle wrote a synopsis about a talking dog which Chase did not use - but it inspired the talking dog in my tale in issue #11; and perhaps other elements as well, which I've conveniently forgotten." JIM PINKOSKI submitted a letter and art that was not used in issue #15. CARL GAFFORD wondered if he was too old to be reading Magnus in #6's letter column. LARRY HERNDON wanted to know, in #4, who wrote and drew Magnus, so he could pass it along to his fanzine readers. Issue #18 had a letter from artist PAUL NEARY. Finally in issue #13, there was a piece of art used, contributed by a name you're familiar with if you've noticed the art with this article...ALAN HUTCHINSON. I've left out a few other familiar names I'm sure, but you'll have to check the pages of Magnus for them.

I owe the following a debt of thanks for their help with this article: Glenn Johnson, Dale Broadhurst, Bill Morse, John McGeehan and most of all RUSS MANNING.

Article by: MARTIN L. GREIM & BOB COSGROVE

Art by: RUSS MANNING, MIKE ROYER, MARTIN L. GREIM, ALAN HUTCHINSON, and WENDY PINI

MAGNUS GREETS AN ANDROID REPRESENTING A FOLK-HERO FROM THE SAVAGE PAST... OR IS TARZAN MEETING AN ACTOR FROM A TV EPIC ABOUT THE FUTURE?
1A
FOR MARTY GREIM—
RUSS MANNING
5-74

Russ Manning

MAGNUS THE ALIENS

CHECKLIST

MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER - Check List

#1. "Magnus, Robot Fighter" Feb. 1963 - 27 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#2. "Operation Disguise" May 1963 - 27 pages
Written by Manning, Shaefer and Friewald

#3. "Giant from Planet X" Aug. 1963 - 27 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#4. "Menace from the Depths" Nov. 1963 - 27 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#5. "The Immortal One" Feb. 1964 - 27 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#6. "Alone Against Talpa" May 1964 - 27 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#7. "The Power of the One Thousand" Aug. 1964 - 27 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#8. "Havoc at Weather Control" Nov. 1964 - 27 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#9. "Robot Ghost" Feb. 1965 - 24 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#10. "The Mysterious Octo-Rob" May 1965 - 23½ pages
Written by Don Christiansen

#11. "Beasts of Steel" Aug. 1965 - 24 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#12. "The Volcano Makers" Nov. 1965 - 24 pages
Written by Don Christiansen with rewriting by Russ Manning

#13. "The Evil Ark of Doctor Noel" Feb. 1966 - 24 pages
Written by Herb Castle
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#14. "The Monster Robs" May 1966 - 24 pages
Written by Herb Castle (?)
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#15. "The Weird World of Mogul Badur" Aug. 1966 - 24 pages
Written by Herb Castle with rewriting by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

"Free to Fly" 1 page information on flight by Russ Manning

#16. "Cloud Cloddie, Go Home" Nov. 1966 - 24 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#17. "The Deadly Peril from Sirius" Feb. 1967 - 24 pages
Written by Herb Castle
Art assisted by Mike Royer

"Flight Service" 1 page information on flight by Russ Manning

#18. "Magnus vs. North Am" May 1967 - 21 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#19. "Fear Unlimited" Aug. 1967 - 21 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#20. "Bunda the Great" Nov. 1967 - 21 pages
Written by Don Christiansen
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#21. "Space Spectre" Feb. 1968 - 21 pages
Written partly by Russ Manning

#22. "Magnus, Robot Fighter" May 1968 - 26½ pages
Reprinted from first issue

THE ALIENS - Check List

#1. "The Aliens" Feb. 1963 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#2. "Space Derelict" May 1963 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#3. "A Matter of Judgement" Aug. 1963 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#4. "Suspense in Space" Nov. 1963 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#5. "Forced Landing" Feb. 1964 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#6. "A Case of Nerves" May 1964 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#7. "The Dream Makers" Aug. 1964 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#8. "An Alien Welcome" Nov. 1964 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#9. "Talk Down" Feb. 1965 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#10. "Fear of the Unknown" May 1965 - 4 pages
Written by Shaefer and Friewald

#11. "False Men" Aug. 1965 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#12. "The Time Distorters" Nov. 1965 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#13. "The Day of the Nightmare" Feb. 1966 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#14. "The Conspiracy" May 1966 - 3½ pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#15. "Defensive Weapon" Aug. 1966 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#16. "Rescue" Nov. 1966 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#17. "Crystals of Life" Feb. 1967 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#18. "The Crystal Crawler" May 1967 - 3½ pages
Written by Russ Manning
Art assisted by Mike Royer

#19. "An Alien Phobia" Aug. 1967 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#20. "The Face of Time" Nov. 1967 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#21. "Into the Abyss" Feb. 1968 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning

#22. "The Incredible Jewels" May 1968 - 4 pages
Written by Russ Manning
Penciled by Russ Manning
Inked by Mike Royer

#1. "Captain Johner and the Aliens"
1967 reprints of the Aliens

Russ Manning inked all of the Magnus pages he penciled and was assisted on inking (backgrounds mostly) on some, by Mike Royer.

NEW GODS

A FOURTH WORLD RETROSPECTIVE

by

BOB COSGROVE

HIGHFATHER

GODS, OR ANYTHING ELSE THAT WE WRITE ABOUT, ARE ALL REFLECTIONS ON OURSELVES, WHAT WE'D LIKE TO BE, WHAT WE DON'T LIKE TO BE, WHAT WE HATE, WHAT WE LOVE, AND WHAT WE LOVE AND HATE AT THE SAME TIME. SO, SURE THE STORIES ARE SOMETIMES CONTRIVED, SOMETIMES UNINSPIRED, BUT THEY'RE STORIES; THE CHARACTERS AND THE CAST ARE REAL, BECAUSE WHOEVER'S IN THAT STORY IS A REFLECTION OF THE GUY WHO BUYS THAT COMIC BOOK.

- JACK KIRBY

With the publication of Mister Miracle #18, the last, lame member of the so-called "Fourth World" series sputtered out. Most will account it a mercy killing; wrenched from the context of its sister books, The New Gods and The Forever People, the book seemed aimless, Jack Kirby's attempts to give it a new look half-hearted. Since its death, Kirby has coasted, turning out books that are often entertaining, seldom remarkable. One can only hope that Kirby is marshalling his imaginative energies for another burst of creative power; in the meantime, it seems appropriate to assess the success--and the failure--of the "Fourth World" books, and to place them in the larger context of the Kirby career.

In creating the world of the "new" gods, Kirby pushed his fascination with technology and machines further than ever before. Kirby had always loved machines, and had excelled in drawing them even in his Blue Bolt days, but at Marvel, he filled his panels with unearthly, humming mechanisms, exotic cars and space ships, and fantastic guns and weapons; if the story didn't require a new machine, no matter, Kirby would throw one in for added atmosphere and the sheer joy of designing it. No two machines were ever the same--even if they were supposed to be. In doing layouts for other artists, Kirby sometimes roughly sketched in faces and figures, and lavishly pencilled guns and machines.

Almost every New God has his own machine; Orion has his power rods, Serifan his cosmic cartridges, Barda her Mega Rod, and, most of all, Metron has his Mobius Chair, "which rides the dimension winds of time-space" (New Gods #1, p.8, pn. 4). For Metron, the chair is a necessity, almost a physical extension of his body. Only twice does Kirby depict Metron standing alone, once in The Forever People #7, and once in a flashback sequence (New Gods #7) which occured before the chair was built. "We have our 'new' god today" Kirby said, "--technology. A new way of looking at things that I have got to represent. How do I represent that new technology? I've got Metron." (Ibid, p. 18)

Metron, the god of the machine, is not an entirely attractive figure--to advance his "scholarly pursuits," he is even willing to assist Darkseid, who shrewdly comments, "You'll betray us all in time, Metron" (New Gods #7, p.11, pn.3). Although he seeks knowledge, he is not wise; he disclaims moral responsibility for the destruction his invention visits on New Genesis: "This war is your doing, Izaya," he alibis. "Can I help it if both sides seek to use me!?" Undeceived, Izaya bluntly replies, "And when it serves your purpose, you cooperate!! --And warriors die because of it" (New Gods #7, p.16, pn. 2-3).

In an earlier article, I say Metron as a cousin of Nathanial Hawthorne's Ethan Brand, who "was a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study." (Sense of Wonder #12, pp. 20-23)

ORION

Hawthorne's objection to Brand was that he had divorced his intellectual capacity from the moral sense, that he acted, not for good, or even evil, but without utilitarian purpose. Essentially, this is Metron's problem, although Kirby is not as condemnatory as Hawthorne.

Metron's services, first for Darkseid, then for New Genesis, epitimize the ambivalence of a technology which may operate for good, or for evil. Even the Mobius chair, which Kirby says, "can do anything," seems sinister, with its ghostly green glow. (Comic & Crypt interview, p. 8) And would anyone want to spend the bulk of his life in a chair? The entire world of the New Gods is similarly ambivalent: for the technological paradise of Supertown, there is the mechanized terror of Desaad and Granny Goodness; the wonders of the "project" must struggle with the DNA freaks from "the evil factory."

Next to the Mobius chair, the most interesting technological creation is the mother box. Its very name admits the scope of man's dependence on the machine, and like the Mobius Chair, it may perform good or evil, and belongs to residents of both Supertown and Apokolips. Kirby indicates that the New Genesis mother boxes, at least, are connected with a mysterious, infinite power called "THE SOURCE." Apparently, the Apokolips mother boxes are not, however, for in Mr. Miracle #9, Metron and Himon both indicate that Kreetin lacks the moral stature to make his mother box work, yet the murderous Wonderful Willik, hardly a moral giant, possesses an operable Apokolips model. Similarly, Orion forces Slig's mother box to self-destruct (New Gods #5), but when Desaad tries to destroy the Forever People's mother box, Darkseid's observation is both scornful and prescient: "The murder of a mother box! I didn't think you were foolish enough to attempt it, Desaad!" (Forever People #4, p. 10) After Desaad fails miserably, Darkseid says, "A mother box is linked to the infinite! And made to plague us" (p.12, pn.1).

The mother boxes' functions are varied, and never fully defined, but obviously crucial to the new gods, for few Kirby characters lack them, or travel anywhere without them. A prophecy? Not an impossible one, in an age of "flow technology," where more American homes have television than indoor plumbing.

The Media

Kirby devotes a number of issues to studying "media manipulation," technology's role in "brainwashing." The broad plot of the "Fourth World" series is the struggle of the "new gods" to prevent Darkseid, the master of Apokolips, from obtaining "the anti-life equation," a psychic power that enables its possessor to impose his will on the minds of others. Darkseid's goal is thought control, and while seeking the anti-life equation, he utilizes less sophisticated, but effective measures to control the citizens of earth, just as he dominates Apokolips.

Chief general in Darkseid's thought-control army is Glorious Godfrey, a huckster, a super-pitchman aided by a sinister organ whose unearthly chords whip emotions to a frenzy, and sells his listeners freedom from responsibility: "Judge others! Enslave others! Kill others!" (Forever People #3, p. 3.) Nothing is wrong, if done for Darkseid. Godfrey's "Justifiers" obviously suggest Hitler's storm troopers, burning libraries, defacing the property of minorities, beating up women and children; indeed, Kirby begins Forever People #3 with a quotation from Hitler. On a more satirical levil, however, Godfrey's name, his rooster-red hair and features, and his philosophy ("inventive selling" Forever People #3, p.21) all recall the golden boy of radio, Arthur Godfrey. One's reaction to Glorious, who does everything save fire Julius LaRosa for "lack of humility," depends, I suppose, on one's opinion of "the man who can sell anything." I stand with Kirby, and the late George Frazier, who observed that Godfrey was possibly "the only

DARKSEID

GLORIOUS GODFREY

man who could do a Crest commercial and make tooth decay look positively attractive."

All of Godfrey's mechanical paraphernalia, no matter how helpful, how exotic and visually exciting, ultimately depend on human will. Godfrey can push, nudge, provide excuses, but Kirby insists that the individual still makes his own choices. At one point, after Godfrey has dispatched his minions on a mission of destruction, a follower asks him about the source of his power: "They're _really_ eager to destroy! What's the secret, Godfrey? The _helmet_? The _uniform_? The _creed_??" (Forever People #6, p.4, pn. 5) And Godfrey replies: "Earthmen are given all those things at _birth_!! I merely _justify_ their readiness to use them!! _That's why_ they love me!!!" (Forever People #6, p. 4, pn.5)

The theme of thought control runs throughout the "Fourth World" books, and interweaves with Kirby's old interest in groups vs. individuals, and the loneliness of individual choice. Before returning to those themes, however, it is necessary to examine the type of characters who stride through Kirby's new universe.

Morals

The moral alignments of the "Fourth World" are simpler than those of the Marvel world. At Marvel, Thor might team up with the living planet to fight the villainous Galactus this month, and team up with the noble Galactus to battle the threat of the living planet the following month; today's super-villain might well be tomorrow's Avenger. In the "Fourth World" there are only two sides, good, represented by New Genesis, and evil, embodied in Apokolips. Earth, the middle ground, does not harbor many ambiguous characters--most mortals who become embroiled in the battle choose up sides. Only three major, ambiguous characters appear in the series, Orion, Metron, and the Black Racer, but only the latter, as a symbol of death, is truly neutral, "a power that challenges _all_ power" (New Gods #3, p. 1). Although Metron cooperates with Darkseid on at least one occasion, his sympathies are clearly with the other side. "Darkseid!!," he cries. "How I want _him_ destroyed!" (New Gods #7, p. 16, pn. 4). As the war unfolds, Metron plays a crucial part in encouraging the young Scott Free to resist the brainwashing techniques of Granny Goodness (Mister Miracle #5 & 6) and in perpetrating his eventual escape from Apokolips (Mister Miracle #9). Orion, Darkseid's son, possesses many of Apokolips's attributes, a love of battle and violence, and an incredible capacity for destruction, but he uses them only in the service of New Genesis. Even his costume reflects this. In a letter to Comic Crusader, Kirby spoke thusly of Orion's helmet..."Orion's helmet was designed so it would project the image of the vigilant and powerful hunting dog. I felt that these qualities portrayed Orion's true nature as a killer, motivated by noble purposes."

As he had at Marvel, Kirby creates immensely powerful father figures to preside over the universe; Darkseid rules Apokolips, Highfather, New Genesis. In contrast to Marvel, however, these father figures are functionally important. Odin, though supposedly all-wise only survived as ruler of Asgard because Thor was around to correct his various gaffes. In spite of his power, he seemed much less impressive than Galactus, whose cosmic strength served no moral purpose. Now, with the opportunity to set up the universe from scratch, Kirby makes two father-figures central figures. Darkseid is the villain who animates all the "Fourth World" books, Highfather the head general in New Genesis's counter-attack.

Having vested both physical and symbolic power in the hands of Darkseid and Highfather, Kirby shows no desire to upstage them with any "free-lance" god figures. The "Fourth World" has no Watcher, no Galactus, no Orikal, no Ego, the living planet. However, Kirby needs to flesh out the characters of Darkseid and Highfather, and he cannot do this if he limits them to mere symbols of good and evil, battling on equal terms like Ying and Yang. If they are to function as humans painted on a colossal scale, Kirby needs a structuring force which will not upstage them.

To meet the problem, Kirby creates The Source, a mysterious moral power which exists outside the universe, and communicates to the residents of New Genesis through the Mother Boxes, or by writing in letters of fire on a white wall. The Source, says Orion, "gives us the _irrevocable_ counsel," but Highfather ads, "It does _not_ decide! The right of choice is ours" (New Gods #1, p. 9, pn. 1). Further, Orion thinks of Death as a journey to the Source, telling the Deep Six, "if we go to the Source--you demons go with us!" (New Gods #6, p. 25). All this obviously suggests the traditional, Judaeo-Christian interpretation of God.

By adding The Source, Kirby introduces an additional layer of complexity; now, Darkseid and Highfather can function as both traditional heroes, gods of limited power, or as pure symbols, Satan and God himself. "The Pact," (New Gods #7) the origin of the war of the gods, clearly functions on several levels. Most simply, it is a rollicking adventure story, with strange weapons, wicked villains, and exciting battles. Secondarily, it suggests the genesis myth; Izaya and his wife enjoy the tranquility of paradise until Darkseid, like a snake in the garden, appears to bring death, and plunge the new gods into war. On a third level, it is a classic presentation of the mythic Initiation hero, in which the hero undergoes various ordeals in passing from immaturity to adulthood. Generally, the initiation process consists of three steps: 1) separation and isolation of the hero from society, 2) the hero's transformation (symbolic death followed by rebirth), and 3) the triumphant return of the hero. Highfather follows this pattern. After losing his wife in the opening battle, he pursues a costly course of revenge which brings him little satisfaction. Finally, he rejects his career as a warrior: "We are _worse_ than the old gods! They destroyed _themselves_! We destroy _everything_!" (New Gods #7, p. 18, pn. 3).

Feeling "infected" by Darkseid, Izaya departs from "these tortured ruins of war" to "find Izaya" in the wasteland (p. 18-19). There, in anger and despair, he tears off his body armor, rejects his war-staff, as the elements pummel his body. "The dry wind _rises_ and...violent electrical flashes twist and _stab_ across the _darkened_ land," signalling the arrival of a turning point in Izaya's existence (New Gods #7, p.19 pn. 6). For the first time, the Source reveals itself to Izaya, transforming not only his inner values, but his outward appearance. When he returns to civilization, Izaya obviously has undergone a spiritual death and rebirth--he wears "the clothes of _peace_ ... and carries a new staff," shaped like a shepherd's crook. His very name is new, Highfather; and his hair, once the dark black of youth, now is the white of age, wisdom, mystic inscrutability (p.21).

Father figures are of interest not only to artists and mythologists, but psychologists as well. In Freud's conception of the "family romance," the child, upon discovering that his parents do not measure up to his idealized conception, begins a quest for fictitious "real" parents who do. Many myths incorporate this--the myth of Phaeton, Oedipus, and others. Many ideal father figures appear in Kirby's books—The Guardian, Clay Duncan,

(of Boy's Ranch) and Prof. X all represent substitute fathers for children who are usually orphans.

The quest for the father, a subliminal theme in Kirby's earlier work, rises to the forefront of the "Fourth World" books. Mister Miracle--"Scott Free"--while still an infant, is thrust through the dimensional doorway to Apokolips and entrusted to the orphanage of Granny Goodness; Kirby never indicates that Scott Free ever learns that he is Highfather's son. Orion, son of Darkseid, never learns who his parents are; thrust into New Genesis, he confronts Highfather: "Father? I was told I'd find my father here!! If you're my father, speak" (New Gods #7, p.23-24).

Kirby, obviously aware of the Freudian vein he is mining, readily exploits it; the father/son conflict echos from book to book. In New Gods #1, when the source sends Orion to war with Darkseid, Metron observes, "How wonderously wise is the Source! Who is more ready to fight the father--than the son" (p.9, pn. 3). Darkseid, for his part, exhibits a strange parental pride in his enemy son's accomplishments; "We could never take one such as Orion captive!" he tells Desaad, for "His kind dies in battle! And in death would look greater than a vermin like you" (New Gods #2, p. 21, pn. 2). When Darkseid's two sons, Kalibak and Orion meet in combat, Darkseid destroys Desaad for assisting Kalibak (New Gods #11, "Darkseid and Sons") even though Kalibak fights for Darkseid. Had the series continued, Kirby could well have introduced another such relationship, since New Gods #10 revealled that Forager was not a true member of the "bug" society, but one of the New Gods.

Mothers do not seem nearly so important to Kirby as fathers; they rarely appear in his earlier work, or in the "Fourth World" series. Avia, wife of Izaya and mother of Scott Free, appears in only four pages of New Gods #7 before Steppenwolf murders her. In the same issue, Kirby accords

Darkseid's mother seven panels, then kills her. Tigra, wife of Darkseid, is shunted off to exile, reappearing briefly in Mister Miracle #8, swathed in heavy robes which conceal her features, "a person of high rank" who "bears the status of 'non-being' and "lives with the scorn of Darkseid himself" (p. 10, pn. 1-2).

Granny Goodness, however, is a powerful figure, rivaling even Darkseid himself, and like Darkseid and Highfather, is a standard archetypal figure, "the terrible mother." The terrible mother often appears in fairy tales, as, for example, the Wicked Witch of Hansel and Gretal. She often is not a genuine mother, but a stepmother/usurper, as in Cinderella or Snow White. Granny Goodness represents the ultimate evil authority figure, the super-ego as repressive power, every young boy's nightmare of his school teacher.

Apokolips, under the control of Darkseid and Granny, is a negative utopia in the tradition of Orwell's 1984, Huxley's Brave New World, and Burgess's A Clockwork Orange. All these books deal with thought control, repressive educational systems which serve the needs of the state at the expense of the individual, and a regimented, drab society. As noted earlier, free will vs. thought control is the central theme of the entire "Fourth World" tetralogy. As the mother figure, Granny Goodness employs technological brainwashing as an educational and socializing technique.

A single two-page story, "Young Scott Free" (Mister Miracle #6), shows that Granny's orphanage shares much with other negative utopias. As in Brave New World and A Clockwork Orange, chemical brainwashing takes place. Granny feeds her "little darlings" "energy blocks" saturated with "brain drain chemical;" so complete is Granny's control that she even ritualizes the eating process with a "Ready utensil! Down utensil!" drill. Ritual seems important to thought control; the residents of Brave New World have their orgy-porgies, the citizens of 1984 their "group hate" sessions. This is natural, for when people cannot think for themselves, they must fall back on detailed standards of conduct which dictate their actions in every situation. Life on Apokolips seems highly ritualized--in addition to the meal sequence in "Young Scott Free," there are the warrior codes of Kanto, Big Barda, and others. Much of Granny's training employs ritual--

those who deceive Granny must stand on "the punishment block," which is "the throne of truth," and, when found guilty, face the ritualized punishment of the gauntlet (Mister Miracle #5).

Like ritual, slogans provide codes of action, and serve to suppress individual thought; as the ritual twists human conduct to the ends of the state, so the slogan warps the very fabric of language. As Orwell's "Ministry of Hate" masquerades as the "Ministry of Love," so Granny's loathesome institution purports to be "Happiness Home for the Orphaned Young" (Mister Miracle #7, p. 19). As the young of Huxley's world parrot "History is Bunk" and "I'd hate to be a Gamma," so Granny's charges repeat that "Cruelty breeds respect!" and "Die for Granny--and She Will Live for You" (Mister Miracle #6).

Slogans also focus loyalty on a single, god-like ruler, such as 1984's Big Brother, Nazi Germany's Hitler, or Communist Russia's Lenin. Many slogans reinforce loyalty to Darkseid: "You're not a beast--if you kill for Darkseid!" and "You're not a liar--if you lie for Darkseid!" hang in Granny's cafeteria (Mister Miracle #6). Darkseid is not only ruler of Apokolips, but its god; Orion confidently discards his equipment at the foot of Darkseid's statue, sure that no one would dare approach it, for "the statue is sacred to them" (New Gods #1, p. 12, pn. 4). Pointing to a bust of Darkseid, Granny sums up the message: "Love him! Serve great Darkseid! Wear your pointed helmets proudly where he leads! Die for him--and reward Granny" (Mister Miracle #2, p. 14, pn. 3.)

And they do love him, as they love Granny, for in her orphanage, love is a scarce commodity; when she has broken her charges, they still grasp eagerly for such pseudo-love as their strange Granny, clad in her scaled armor, can offer. Childlike, they compete for her affection; consider this exchange:

Soldier: They are ours!--The traitor and his gnat!
We'll be heroes to granny!

Soldier 2: She'll sing our praises and give us gifts!
I can't wait to get back! (Mister Miracle #2

p. 14, pn. 3).

One token of Granny's favor is the soldier's rank, to be adjusted up or down according to her pleasure. Like some obscene cub scout den mother, she portions her young charges into animal packs. New arrivals begin as "worms," but then, "you'll become a rat! Then a wolf! And who can tell? --You may get to be one of Granny's fine young tigers! Won't that be a glorious day!! All praise to Darkseid" (Mister Miracle #7, p. 5, pn. 3).

Rank and uniform divide soldiers into types, obliterate the final shreds of their personalities. Just as the Brave New World breaks down to Alphas, Betas, letters of the Greek Alphabet, each with distinctive costume, just as 1984 encourages organizations such as "the anti-sex league," so most citizens of Apokolips are nameless ciphers in uniform, like Glorious Godfrey's troops. Kirby's artwork hammers this point home, with its rows of identical soldiers, heads shaven, sitting at identical tables eating identical dinners as they mouth identical slogans.

Apparently Granny's training rarely fails. Scott Free and Barda appear to be the only escapees from her orphanage, although Barda subsequently brings some of her special forces troops to earth. However, Scott had the assistance of powerful allies--Metron, Himon, Barda--and the tacit blessing of Darkseid himself, who needed his escape to rationalize resumption of the war with New Genesis. As for Barda, she seems proud of her success in Granny's program; her role is nothing if not traitorous, but when Granny accuses her of treason, she reacts with violence, angrily insisting, "I'm the purest, most superior product you ever turned out" (Mister Miracle #8, p. 24, pn. 1). Although she joins Scott, she cannot purge herself of her past; in response to a question from Oberon, she snaps, "Fool! We serve only Darkseid! --And Darkseid serves conflict!" then adds, with self-disgust, "Aaaghh! You're making me repeat the phrases taught by Granny Goodness" (Mister Miracle #4, p. 3, pn. 2).

Granny's orphanage provides setting for the Kirby drama of individual vs. group, group vs. society, and the loneliness of individual choice, which in fact recurs throughout all the "Fourth World" books, in various forms. Now, the whole universe shatters into "in" groups and "out" groups. Apokolips--and earth--are the domains of hostile groups, while New Genesis seemingly offers friendship and succor. But reaching New Genesis would appear to be difficult--a whole society is excluded as "bugs," and individuals who seek entrance to Supertown meet with little success. Kirby makes Superman the first applicant. In Forever People #1, Kirby's Superman, "despite his powers," is a lonely "minority of one in a teeming world of billions! A stranger in a strange land" (p. 10, pn. 1). By accident, he learns of New Genesis--Supertown, and after an intensive search, is surprised to discover that to cross the dimensional bridge--the boom tube, he needs only "deep desire" (p. 23, pn. 2). Delighted, he begins the journey, but on the way, worries about Darkseid, fears that he is deserting mankind. "There is a loud thunderclap--and Superman finds himself back on earth! And as the boom tube fades, Superman catches a glimpse of distant, gleaming towers...then, like a dream, they too fade, and are gone" (p. 24). Superman chooses loneliness, but Supertown remains a glittering ideal, both the loss and the consolation.

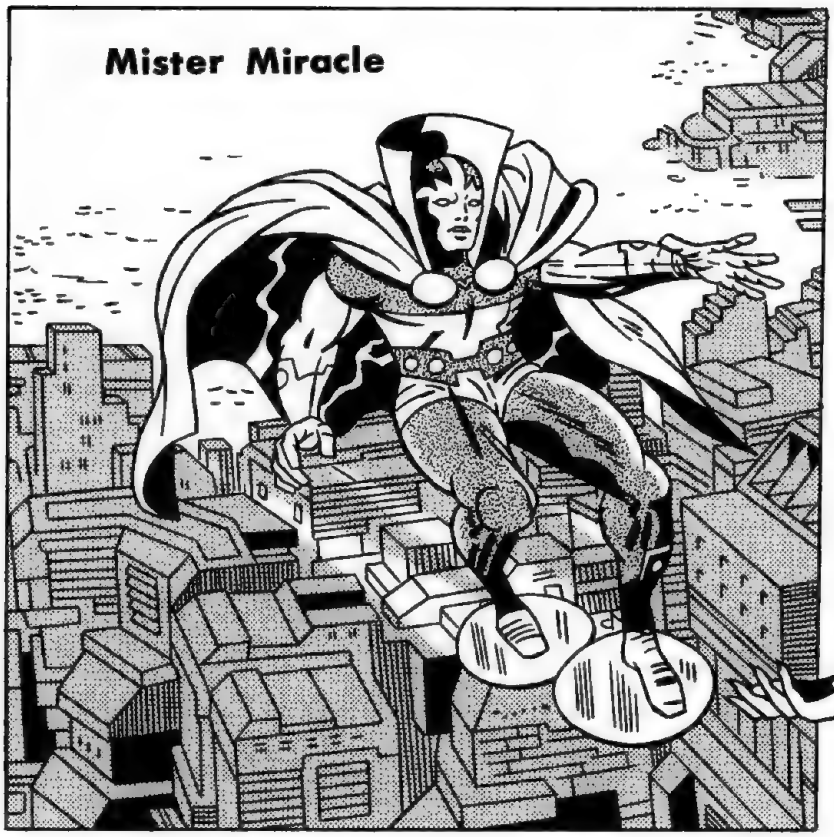
Some time later, however, Superman stumbles into Supertown by accident, and delighted at his good fortune, seeks to serve New Genesis as he has served earth, only to find that there's "very little need for me here!! Everyone's doing fine without my help!!"(Jimmy Olsen #147, p. 23, pn. 3). Highfather offers sympathy, suggests Superman might be happier back on earth, and then promptly sends him there. Paradise, it seems, glitters brightest from a distance.

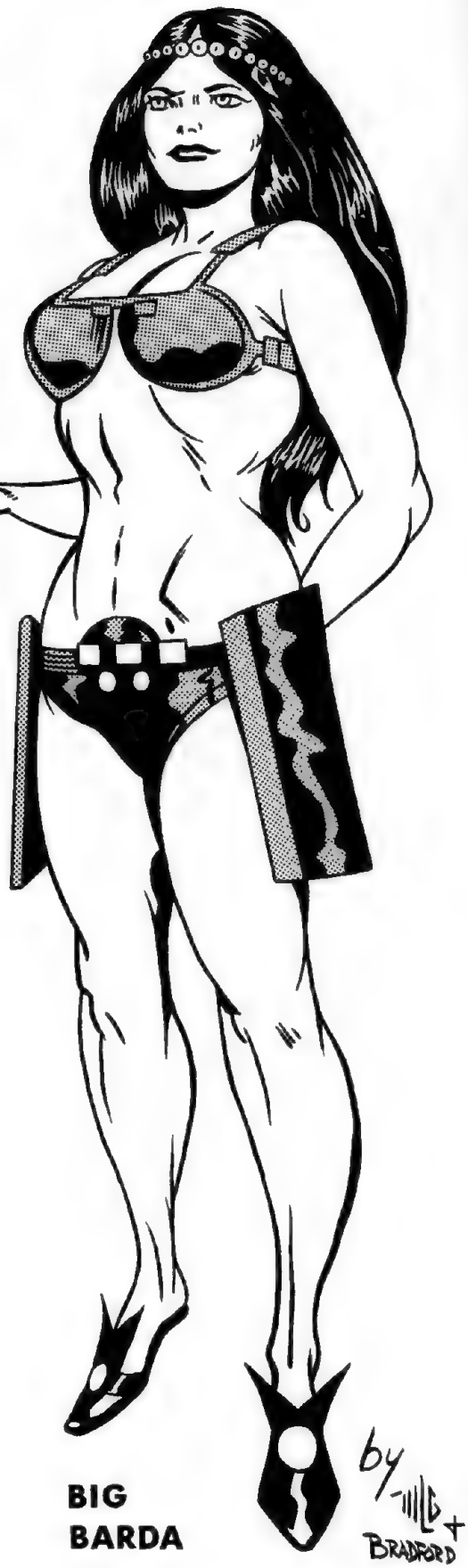
Even becoming a citizen of Supertown is no guarantee of happiness, or peace. Orion, ostensibly the leading warrior in the armies of New Genesis, is never light-hearted, never at ease with himself, or his power. "I am two worlds—" he says, "like New Genesis, and that demon's pit —Apokolips! —One drifting forever in the shadow of the other" (New Gods #1, p. 6, pn. 5). To emphasize his duality, Orion literally has two faces, a handsome, cosmetic "public face," engineered by mother box, and an ugly, battle-scarred, private face, which prompts Slig to taunt, "Orion is his very own monster" (New Gods #5, p.20 pn. 4). Kirby's point, like Robert Louis Stevenson's in Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde, is that the two faces belong to the same man. Orion is an everyman—moving with seeming ease in the group, yet at the same time, concealing a private face; he is both id and ego—with mother box playing the role of a benevolent superego.

Both Mister Miracle and The Forever People are conceptually bound to the group/individual theme. Where The Forever People use the same variation as the X-Men and the Boy's Ranch —the inner group of comrades vs. the hostile world at large, Mr. Miracle goes one step further—the lone individual battling an entire planet, be that planet earth, or Apokolips. Individual stories exploit this theme skillfully; note, particularly, Mister Miracle #3 & 4, featuring "The Paranoid Pill" and "The Closing Jaws of Death!" In these stories, the villain, Dr. Bedlam, lures Mister Miracle to the top floor of a skyscraper. Using chemical means (the "paranoid pill," actually a gas capsule dropped into the ventilation system) Dr. Bedlam turns every inhabitant in the building into a "hostile, dangerous, raving maniac" (Mister Miracle #3, p. 13, pn. 2). To escape, Mister Miracle must descend to the lobby through this army of insane enemies. The premise behind those stories--and indeed, behind the Mister Miracle book is that life is a series of deadly traps, chains, obstacles, and restraints set by society, which the individual, fighting alone, must extricate himself from. If one is to attain his full potential, reach self-fulfillment, he must elude the complex snares of society, be they physical, or mental.

In the "Fourth World" society is literally at war with individuals of tremendous power, fueling unprecedented scenes of violence, conflict, and power. Even when the New Gods have no outlet for their violence, their anger shakes buildings and batters onlookers like a sudden thunderstorm. Orion, particularly, cannot enjoy a peaceful moment--he is above neither shouting a temper tantrum (New Gods #9, p. 14-15) nor destroying inanimate statuary (New Gods #11, p. 5) when frustrated by Darkseid. Similarly, Darkseid, furious at the wedding of Scott Free and Barda, causes a "killer-funnel" which spoils it. When the storm passes and Shilo emerges, he questions a strange figure, "Look at that dude! Have you been out in the storm all this time, mister?" To which Darkseid returns, "I am the storm!"

Kirby's remark that "Violence is just like a well-timed dance, a ballet," may be true in terms of his work at Marvel, and much of his earlier work. One





can almost count the number of characters who died in the hundred-odd Kirby issues of the Fantastic Four on a single hand; so rarely did a Marvel character expire that Lee sometimes cover-heralded them with "Another Mighty Marvel Death!," or somesuch tasteful blurb. The "Fourth World" books live in the atmosphere of death; I would guess that in numbers of people killed and maimed, they easily rival EC. Consider, for example, Orion's fight with the Deep Six (New Gods #4-5); Kirby could have ignited the battle in any number of ways, but he chooses to introduce a whole new god--excuse the pun--simply for the purpose of killing him, and allowing Orion three pages to express his outrage as police fish the fallen Seagrin's body from the river. After killing a number of mutated creatures, Orion tracks Slig to his lair and takes great relish in killing him. He then attempts to catch up with "the glory boat," a sea monster that destroys ships and kills passengers. On the trail, he encounters three survivors, whom he deposits on a raft. However, Jaffar of Apokolips finds them, killing one, just as Orion returns; angered, he blasts Jaffar with lethal astro bolts, striking his form again and again until it totally disintegrates. The shock of the battle drives a second survivor mad. The remaining members of the Deep Six attack, but Lightray's weapon creates a tremendous explosion which kills the evil gods.

The best of the "Fourth World" books--Mister Miracle #9, featuring "Himon," is also the most violent; it introduces a new father figure, and again reiterates the importance of asserting individual decision against the demands of society. The violence which fills the story is the violence of a society that will not tolerate dissent. "Himon," the star of the story, is clearly intended to be Jack Kirby himself, finally caught up in his own phantasmagora, shepherding his characters through the hostile pits of Apokolips. Not surprisingly, Himon claims credit for Kirby's many creations. "I'm a dreamer," he explains, "a visionary! A 'Think-Tank' who pioneered the calculating mother-box and linked it with the Source! I found the X-Element and pioneered the boom tube! --I dream! I roam the universe!! Darkseid wants to own it" (p. 21, pn. 2). Metron pays Himon less-stinting homage. "The wonders I build," he says, "are born in your brain! The roads I travel are opened by your massive perceptions" (p. 16, pn. 2). Studying Himon may yield some clues to Kirby's own character; Himon is kindly, befriending the children of Apokolips, but capable of surprising violence when sufficiently provoked. When "Wonderful Willik" kills his pupils, Himon cooly murders him in revenge. He is unpretentious, given to occasional sarcasm, and not above calling Scott Free "skinhead"; however, he clearly recognizes his own superiority, for his is the strange humility of the artist, fiercely proud of his talents and achievements, yet aware that those talents are inexplicable gifts. Himon's definition of "The Source" is peculiarly an artists: "The Source! It Lives! It Burns! When we reach out and touch it--the core of us is magnified! And we tower as tall as Darkseid" (p.21, pn. 4). God as creative power.

Himon, as an independent artist and creator, poses the chief threat to Darkseid and the dominance of "anti-life," the murder of independent thought. To eliminate Himon, Darkseid's servitors reach new heights of violence. The story opens with "Wonderful Willik" turning a flamethrower on a crowd of people, killing them all, all save Himon, who escapes to a secret hovel where he tutors young rebels, including Scott Free. Kirby takes care to make each of the youngsters a seperate personality, particularly young Auralie, whom young Scott Free scorns. "Show me the value in this female, Himon," he demands. "She does nothing but stare into that mind-video" (p. 9, pn. 5). Himon's rebuke again emphasizes the high value he assigns to the imagination; "How do you know she does nothing?" he replies. "Because she creates visions that dance? Auralie's thoughts are beautiful! She creates beauty! Imagine--doing this on a world like Apokolips" (p. 9, pn. 8-9). Suddenly, a mob shatters the door, and Himon's charges scatter, save for the traitorous Kreetin. Though fully aware of Kreetin's treachery, Himon buys his freedom by surrendering to the mob. Delivered to Darkseid, Himon is put to death many times. Kirby portrays three killings, then is content to add, "Death follows endless death! The body of Himon is forever paraded in triumph throughout the ghettos of Apokolips" (p. 15, pn. 4). The body is a replica. Himon, in the crowd, watches his corpse with amused detatchment, laughing, perhaps, at the futility of attempting to "kill" the imagination.

Himon's young pupils are not so lucky. Kirby kills them all, including Kreetin. He has taken such pains to portray them as individuals to heighten outrage at the evil of their murders. As for Auralie, "we found her," Wonderful Willik explains, "--Dancing like a pretty little doll! --For which we gave her a pair of high-voltage shock boots" (p. 19, pn. 3).

One pupil lives, Scott Free. In earlier issues, Kirby had documented his life at Granny Goodness's orphanage; now, Scott Free is on the verge of escaping, with Himon's assistance. But Himon, though a powerful and indispensible ally, refuses to push

Scott; once more Kirby hammers home the loneliness of individual choice--Scott may join the group, or defy a planet, but he must decide. Apparently, Himon will not even recruit pupils. "I was a fool to seek you out," Scott tells him (p. 7, pn. 4). Only after Scott approaches him, does Himon teach. When Metron urges Himon to engineer Scott's escape, Himon demurs: "You showed Scott the way to me--and I can teach him to escape Apokolips! But I can't give him the resolve! Only Scott can renounce what he has here" (p. 16, pn. 3). Finally, Scott does decide. Darkseid, like Himon, refuses to interfere as Scott crawls towards a Boom Tube door to earth, created by Himon and Metron. "He can take it!" Darkseid shouts. "I'll not stop him now! If courage and bravery took him here!--- Some of it was Mine! Stay, Warrior! Let me complete the destruction of Scott Free--so you may live with the majesty that is the power of Darkseid" (p. 25, pn. 4-5). Scott, like Superman, chooses earth; and like Superman, to choose is to act. As he voices his wish, his form vanishes, and Darkseid stands alone, watching the already fading images of Himon and Metron.

Assessment

Assessing the "Fourth World" books is a difficult task, for often their aesthetic virtues are their commercial flaws. Going one step further than his sequential issues at Marvel, Kirby created an ambitious, interlocking epic of four books. No reader could possibly fully appreciate a single title, much less a single issue, without following all the books.

Adding to this commercial handicap, was the fact that Kirby had been planning this series, waiting for the opportunity to bring his new characters to life, all during his last few years at Marvel. Apparently, when his chance came, he was bursting with creative excitement, unable to restrain himself from flooding his new characters onto the page. Events followed too fast; books seemed too complex, as Kirby pursued eccentric side paths. "The Bug" stories were fascinating, but their introduction so early into the already complicated New Gods books was a mistake--they belonged in issue thirty-five, not issues nine and ten. In a sense, Kirby's own energy worked against him. With Thor and the Fantastic Four, he had begun slow; only when the books were established favorites did new characters suddenly proliferate at fantastic speed. The Inhumans, for example, did not appear until Fantastic Four #45.

One must also say, that not all of Kirby's new characters were successes. Kirby's Black Racer--a parapalegic on skis wearing an absurd, pseudo-Roman, red fighting helmet, was at best a failure, at worst an embarrassment. Old characters such as The Newsboy Legion, sometimes suffered, torn from their original environments. Kirby made a valiant attempt to integrate them with his new worlds, creating look-alike offspring of the original legion, and adding a new, black member, Flippa-Dippa. Only the Guardian, a DNA replica of the original Jim Harper, survived the transition with anything approaching his original vitality. The Legion was an anachronism, a nineteen-forties slum street gang careening through the super-scientific realms which reflected Kirby's new interests. Talking like tenement dwellers, they travelled in a vehicle that might have been borrowed by Reed Richards. Flippa-Dippa represented the series low, and, when considered with the Black Racer, cast serious doubt on Kirby's ability to realistically deal with black characters. Flippa, a scuba diving fanatic, is so enamored with the sport that he spends his every waking hour in diving gear, trying to look ridiculous, and succeeding admirably. And--a minor point to be sure--freed from Stan Lee's editorial constraints, Kirby once again indulged his unabashed admiration for Dickens, unfortunately including Dickens's delight in descriptive personal names such as "Gradgrind" and "M'Choakumchild." In a satire strip such as Fighting American, this penchant was excusable; for a self-described "epic for our time," it seemed quaint and--well, nineteenth century.

A few of Kirby's attempts at humor met with more success, notably the two "Goody Rickles" issues of Jimmy Olsen, guest-starring Don Rickles. In addition to a creditable caricature of Rickles, Kirby managed to capture Don's "insult comedy" humor style, doubling the humor by tossing in a "look-alike" double, "Goody Rickles," wearing a ridiculous super-hero costume. Morgan Edge, new owner of the Daily Planet, serves as straight man for the Rickles duo. At one point in issue #139, Goody kneels on the floor, grabbing the dead-pan Edge by the waist as he begs for a reporting assignment...Edge thinks, "The solution is obvious. This man must be killed" (Jimmy Olsen #139, p. 12, pn. 1). Good as the strip was, readers might have wondered about the cover caption on Jimmy Olsen #141, "Rushing towards the Greatest Climax Ever

Seen In Comics"; said climax was the police bomb disposal unit carrying Don Rickles to the door as he said, "Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick--Hurry! Hurry! Or this building goes up" (p. 22, pn. 5).

The "Fourth World" books lasted only a few short years; given more time, Kirby might have molded them into his magnum opus, but as the record now stands, one must say that his most ambitious work is not his best. Kirby's finest sustained achievement remains The Fantastic Four and Thor. However, one can say that his work reached a new peak of sophistication and intensity with the "Fourth World", and that some of the individual stories--"The Pact," "Himon," and to a lesser extent, "The Glory Boat" and "A Superman in Supertown" rank among Kirby's finest work. And, although it seems unlikely, there is always a slim possibility that Kirby may one day have the opportunity to bring his characters back and fulfill their great promise.

Until then, one may be forgiven for picturing Kirby, standing like Himon on the surface of Apokolips, free at any time to escape in personal visions, or surrender to the pressures of the crowd, but determined to remain "grounded," creating new images, and sharing them with any who can recognize beauty and strength--in "Armagetto"--or the pages of a comic book.

Writer: BOB COSGROVE

Artists: JACK KIRBY - JOE SINNOTT - DENNIS FUJITAKE
TOM ARMSTRONG - CARL TAYLOR - DON NEWTON
BILL BLACK - MARTIN L. GREIM

All characters depicted in this article are © National Periodical Pub. Inc. 1974

Lightray watches as Orion and Darkseid meet on the day called....

Last Battle!

MARIE SEVERIN

Interviewed by

Bruce D. Patterson

There are few women in the comic book field and even fewer in the artistic end of it. Comic Crusader is pleased to have an interview with one of the nicest, talented females in this creative medium... MARIE SEVERIN.

Q. Which of the many strips you've worked on, did you find the most enjoyable and/or rewarding and why?

A. I always enjoy humor, but in the "adventure" area Kull had material I personally could dive into - if I had a good inker and more experience, I think at the time Doc Strange would have been great fun.

Q. Are you "comfortable" working in a field dominated by men? Are you treated with equal respect?

A. I like it better than a field dominated by women. More and more women are coming into comics, which is good. Women, I'm sure, will have an effect on comics. As far as respect as an equal goes...if you act like a dope, fellow or gal, you will be treated like a dope.

Q. What are the chances of a female artist making it in the comics business? (Better or worse than the male artist?)

A. In the past no one expected ladies to do comics. They were usually not trained or geared for it and were exposed usually to cute bunny bodies - then Millie the Model and then Romance comics, if they saw comics at all. Today I know for a fact at Marvel, and I imagine the other companies, it is not considered far-fetched that a woman would be useful. Of course if a Marilyn Monroe applied she would probably get a longer interview than a Gravel Gertie, but if Gertie qualified she'd get the job.

Q. Would you mind "getting political" and tell us what you think about the world and do you have any special causes?

A. I'm not active in any political or local organizations. I read the papers and get mad at just about the same things everybody else does - Vote for different parties all the time - contribute art and money now and then to varied causes. I'm not a crusader or a BLAH.

Q. Did you find it hard to be accepted as an artist when you first started at Marvel?

A. I had worked for Stan Lee (Timely) in the late fifties, so when I returned in '64 or '65 to Stan Lee (Marvel)I was immediately given production and coloring, which I had handled before. As time went on, I became useful in art and also had to become acquainted with the Super-Hero stuff, which was new to me. Stan was great in his guidance - then and now the staff at Marvel will give useful criticism. Because of the crash of comics in the fifties there was a gap of new people coming into comics. Now we have the older people and the younger. The young have new approaches and new ideas...a whole potential of new trends. The older people have the proven techniques and know how and if both learn from the other and the company sees and uses the best of both you have a strong line of sellers. I'd like to add that "old pros" very often have not grown with the times. The ones who have are the ones you still see (or read). That should be fair warning to the young...Keep Your Mind Moving!

Q. I believe you were the head colorist at E.C. Did you have any trouble working with "the guys"?

A. In those days most coloring was so awful that E.C. people were delighted to see their work get special attention. This was due to their interest in quality - which they thought should be tried - maybe it would sell.

Q. On the subject of coloring, did you use a different method of coloring at E.C., as opposed to the way you color at Marvel? I ask because it seems the coloring jobs at E.C. were more sensitive (and there's a different look) than at Marvel (generally).

A. There is a distinct difference in color (or should be) for every subject matter. You say E.C. color was more sensitive - maybe you are nostalgic - or maybe you like E.C. stories better. Anyway yesterdays comics and todays comics are comic books because they are colored. The same artists have to approach the look differently. For a black & white they strive for the illus-

trative look by completing the work in the inking. Much of comics (the colored ones) would look very open without color. So much of the mood in color comics can be influenced by the colorist and they can't do much for a job that is poorly inked (they also can foul up some work with thoughtless color). What I'm trying to say is a colorist should add as much as they can to the story telling.

Q. Do you enjoy your job and why?

A. Well I guess I'm not unhappy. I've been there 9 or 10 years. Why? The work on the whole is what I like to do. No job is heaven. You have to work but I've found they pay me for doing what I like and most of the staff is insane.

Sketch for CRAZY when it was a comic book.

Q. Do you feel your "creativity" is hampered by the fast-paced work schedules?

A. Depends. Sometimes the schedule is the only thing that spurs you on - or it can hold you back because of time on adding that extra thought which makes the job more gratifying. Some artists (writers) are gifted with a direct, forceful grasp of the story and work faster. Others are specialists which is so hard if you have no real interest in the subject - (I hate drawing tanks and modern buildings). All things considered schedules are a fact, a necessity. If you have a hang up on a story, or are in love with it, are under too much pressure by taking on more work than you can handle, then schedules are hideous.

Q. Do you prefer the dramatic-type art or the funny stuff you did for "Not-Brand-Ecch?"

A. It's like a two-sided coin. After a long stretch of doing one, it's nice to do the other.

Q. Do you have any authority in helping produce a book?

A. If a situation arises on a job I will suggest changes or additions to the editor or art director or writer - and it is discussed - in final decisions on anything big the editor or art director must evaluate whether you're nuts or have added a good thought. At Marvel I think they try to use the best of people's talents and encourage team work. In a way, you have as much authority as your talent provides.

Q. Who are your favorite comic artists and who or what influences you the most?

A. Me!

Q. Do you have any interests in the fine arts (art, sculpture, music, etc.) and what are they and how do you think they have influenced you?

A. That depends. Museum stuff old and new, handycrafts, whatever, can be considered fine arts by some - well I'm getting off here - let's say if I had the money and space, my home would look like a Flea Market to some. My interests are varied, which is valuable to a comic book person I think, because you must be aware and visualize all kinds of atmospheres and situations. Imagination is as important as skill. The development of imagination (if you have the gift or a little present to begin with) is dependent on how much you were and are able to cultivate. I was lucky to have an artistic family (understanding), strict schooling (forced to learn things I didn't think valuable then), availability of books (all kinds), movies (as many as allowance allowed), and not too much of anything.

Q. What is your opinion of the undergrounds? Also would you do work for "them" if the chance arose?

A. "If I had a chance" - I haven't the time, and above ground comics censorship doesn't bother me. Some undergrounds are really funny and some I really don't understand.

Q. What is your opinion of comic fandom? Any efforts worth noting?

A. Depends on the fan. I wouldn't be answering this interview if I were against fandom, but please note some fans treat comic people like movie stars, which is dopey. Some come on like thieves, but I like the ones who adore me...at a distance.

Q. If you had your choice of strips, which would you like to work on?

A. Tarzan - Prince Valiant - Donald Duck.

Q. Which job(s) do you enjoy and dislike?

A. The most desirable job should offer a challenge - let you show off a bit and pay well.

Q. Are there any projects yet undone you'd like to do?

A. Yes!
1. Finish this interview.
2. I would have liked to have brought Kull to its conclusion - and to have given Sub-Mariner more time.
3. Rob a bank and not get caught.
4. Have time to sculpture.

Q. Is there a particular reason why you and your brother (John Severin) are not working on King Kull any longer?

A. John Severin and I were devoting more time than we at Marvel could afford. We quit and Marvel understood.

Unpublished Marie Severin cover, inked by Frank Giacoia.

Q. What is your opinion of the new talent in the comics field? (Guys like Wrightson, Mayerik, Ploog, Weiss, Staton and Starlin, etc.)

A. They are bright, new, good and have faults just like us old pros did and do.

Q. Any comments on the black and white line Marvel is producing?

A. As I said before, artists and writers must approach stories differently. They don't use color and they don't have the Comics Code. In many ways it is adult. Color is attractive to young audiences, but wouldn't it be great to have all illustrated stories printed in full color as many European books do.

Q. I'd like your opinion of The Academy of Comic Book Art.

A. ACBA has brought together at meetings many people who would never have occasion to meet on a sociable basis for discussion of work, problems and mutual awareness. I hope ACBA continues as an Academy to improve the industries image and standards.

Q. Finally, almost, I'd like some background on yourself. Where you grew up, your parents, education, your brother, relationships and anything you're dying to tell someone.

A. I grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y. I was very surprised growing up, that outside of the family:
1. Not everybody draws...what do they do with themselves?
2. That girls do not get dirty.
3. Nor do they get a Lone Ranger doll for Christmas.
4. It was considered cute for a girl to work in comic books.

It is very good to have friends outside of work as well as in. What could be more boring than to discuss in all your free time what you do at work.

I have nothing else to tell anyone. I express enough in the funnies.

Q. How do you want to be remembered (now or later)?

A. Okay - As that talented, stunning lady - who no one wanted to die...because she was so wonderful!

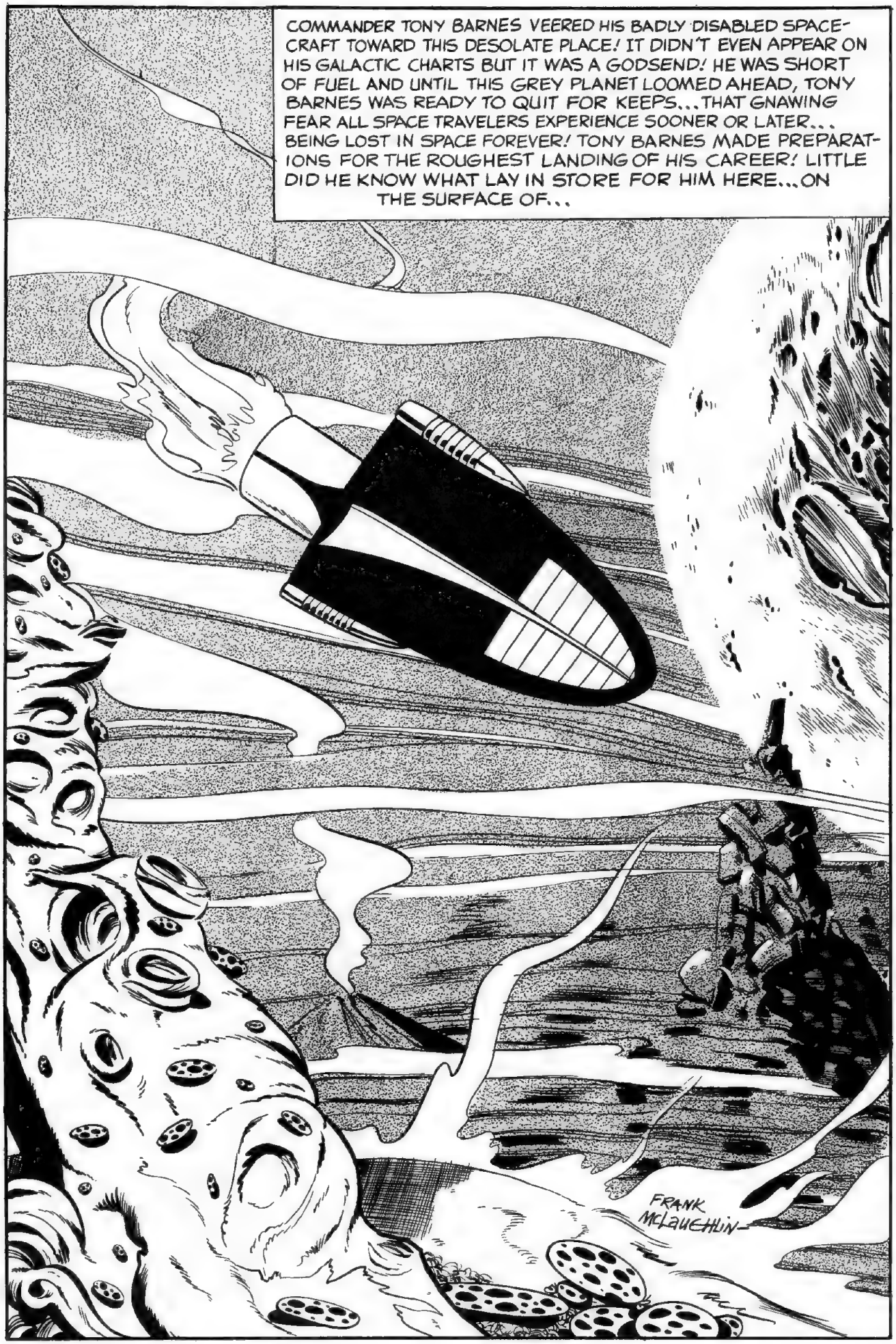
And so, our interview ends. I'd like to thank Bruce Patterson for doing such an outstanding job and I'd also like to thank MARIE SEVERIN for her contributions to the comic book field. Through her skill, comics are just that much more enjoyable.

Art for this article by: Marie Severin, Clyde Caldwell, and Martin L. Greim

All characters shown in this article are © Marvel Comics Group. 1974

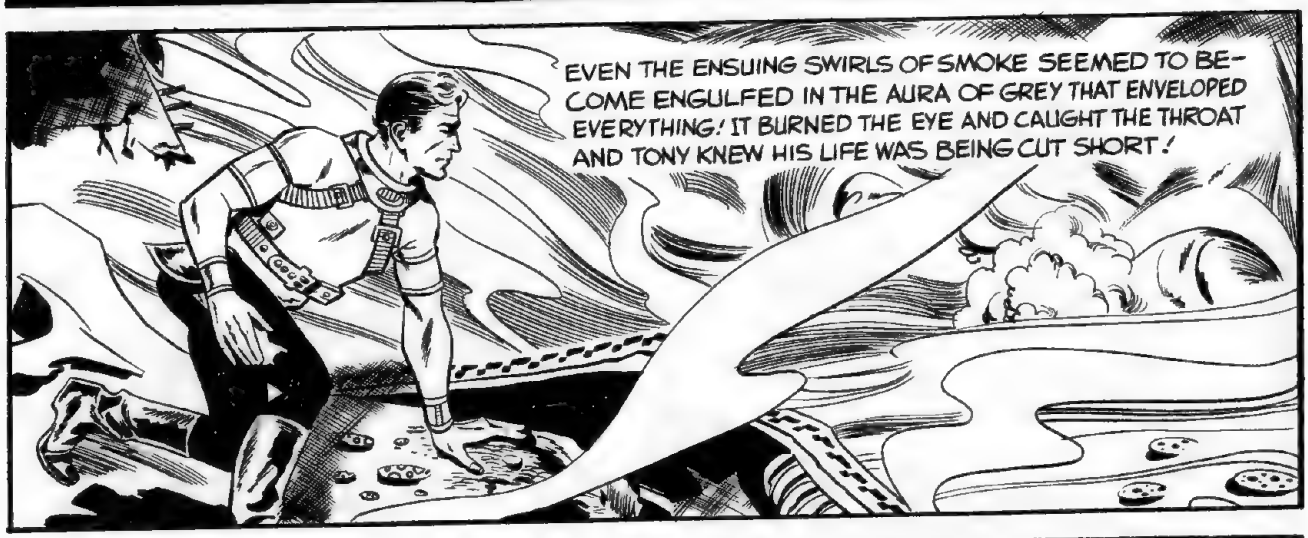
Kull about to face Thulsa Doom

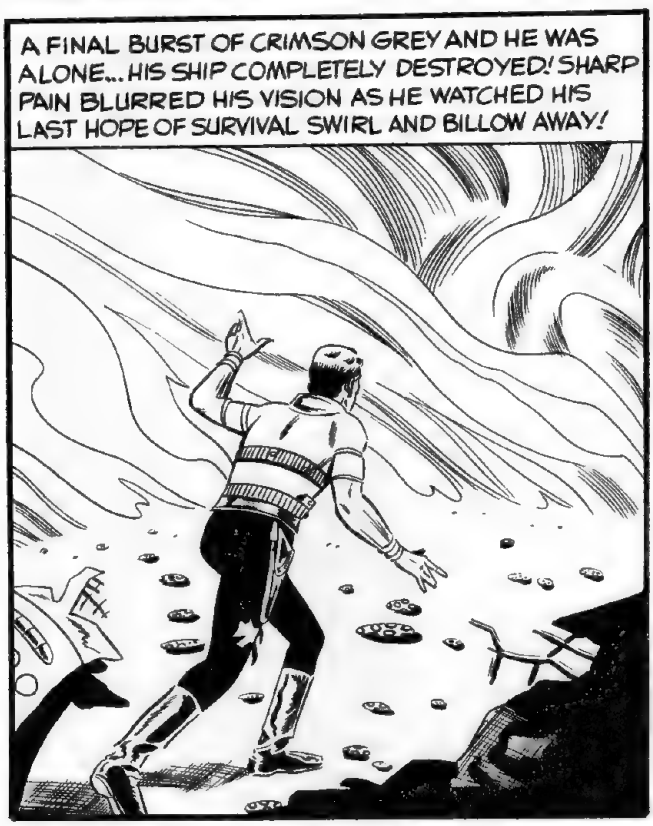
by-MLG

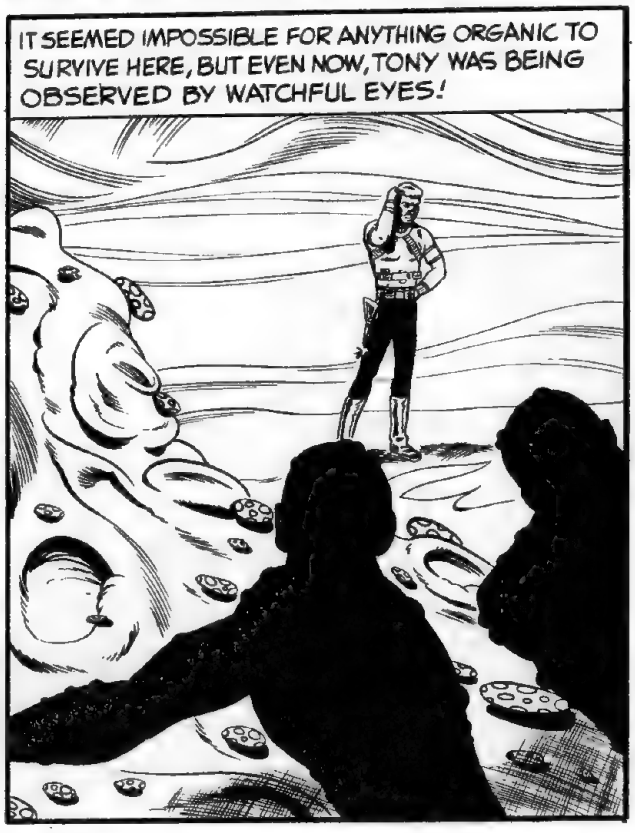

COMMANDER TONY BARNES VEERED HIS BADLY DISABLED SPACE-CRAFT TOWARD THIS DESOLATE PLACE! IT DIDN'T EVEN APPEAR ON HIS GALACTIC CHARTS BUT IT WAS A GODSEND! HE WAS SHORT OF FUEL AND UNTIL THIS GREY PLANET LOOMED AHEAD, TONY BARNES WAS READY TO QUIT FOR KEEPS...THAT GNAWING FEAR ALL SPACE TRAVELERS EXPERIENCE SOONER OR LATER... BEING LOST IN SPACE FOREVER! TONY BARNES MADE PREPARAT-IONS FOR THE ROUGHEST LANDING OF HIS CAREER! LITTLE DID HE KNOW WHAT LAY IN STORE FOR HIM HERE...ON THE SURFACE OF...
FRANK McLAUGHLIN

THE DEAD PLANET!

SOUNDS OF SCREECHING METAL AND A ROARING EXPLOSION SPLIT THE STILL QUIET OF THE COLORLESS PLANET AS THE MAIMED SHIP CRASH-LANDS!


EVEN THE ENSUING SWIRLS OF SMOKE SEEMED TO BECOME ENGULFED IN THE AURA OF GREY THAT ENVELOPED EVERYTHING! IT BURNED THE EYE AND CAUGHT THE THROAT AND TONY KNEW HIS LIFE WAS BEING CUT SHORT!


A FINAL BURST OF CRIMSON GREY AND HE WAS ALONE... HIS SHIP COMPLETELY DESTROYED! SHARP PAIN BLURRED HIS VISION AS HE WATCHED HIS LAST HOPE OF SURVIVAL SWIRL AND BILLOW AWAY!



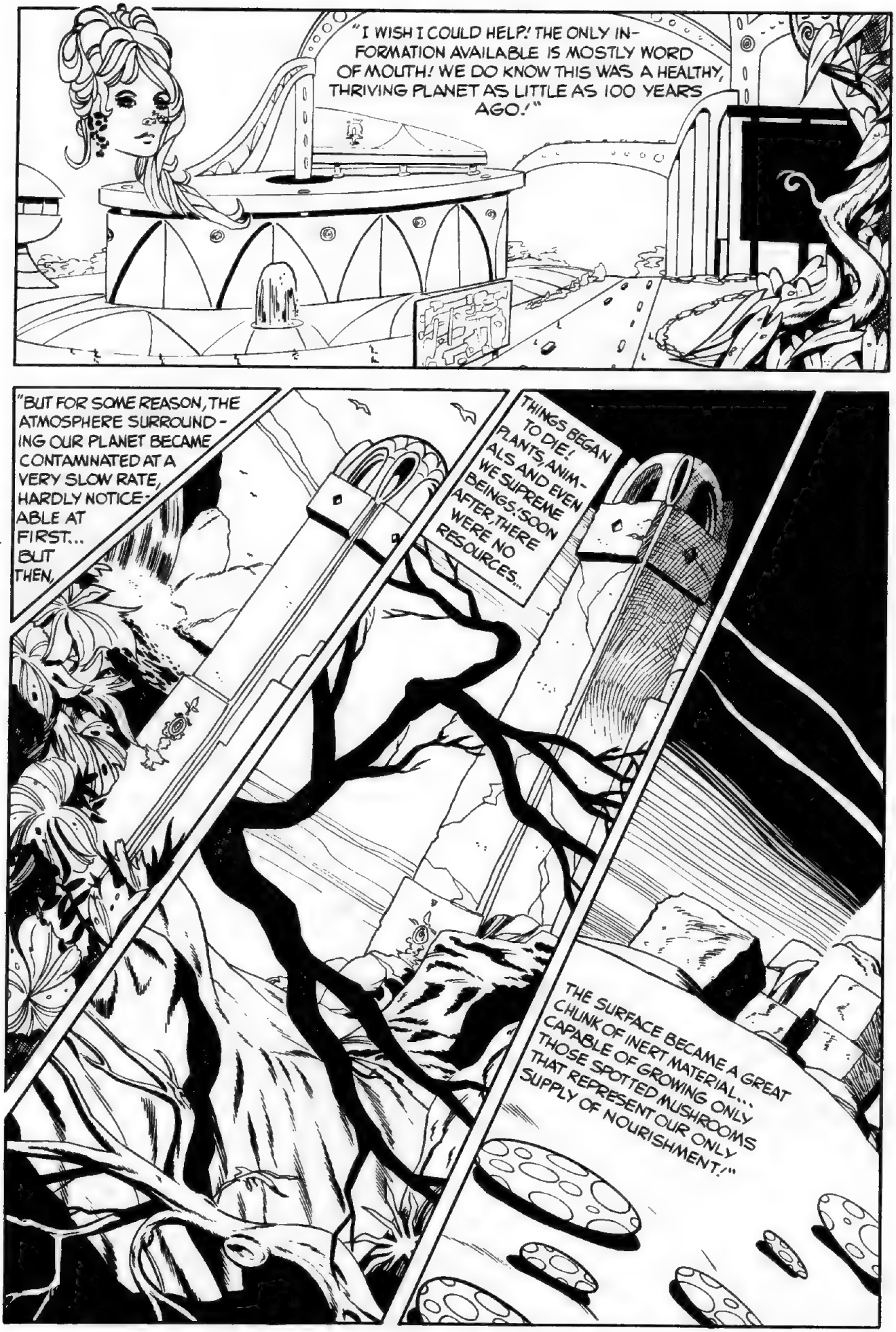
HOLD YOUR FIRE, COMMANDER! WE COME IN PEACE!
WHA..?
PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPON...IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD TO SHOOT AT US!
WHATEVER HARM YOU FEAR HAS ALREADY TOUCHED YOU, EVEN AS YOU STAND HERE WITH US!
ADVANCE SLOWLY! ONE FALSE MOVE AND I WON'T HESITATE TO FIRE!
IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE FOR THAT, COMMANDER! YOU SEE, WE ARE THE LAST OF A HANDFUL OF SURVIVORS HERE... EVEN THOUGH THIS PLANET WAS ONCE FULLY-POPULATED!
EVEN NOW WE CAN STAY ON THE SURFACE FOR ONLY SHORT PERIODS OF TIME! WE'RE HERE TO LEAD YOU UNDERGROUND... WHERE YOU CAN SPEND YOUR REMAINING TIME COMFORTABLY!
MAKE NO MISTAKE, COMMANDER! YOU HAVE ONLY A SHORT TIME LEFT TO LIVE! YOU ARE DOOMED!!!

TONY BARNES SENSED HOPELESSNESS IN THE CREATURE'S VOICE AND FOLLOWED THEM INTO AN UNDERGROUND WORLD OF GREAT BEAUTY!

IT WAS OBVIOUSLY A REFUGE OF SOME BYGONE ERA, CONSTRUCTED BY THE ANCESTORS OF THESE BEINGS! IT WAS LIKE TAKING A TRIP BACK IN TIME AND TONY BEGAN TO FEEL APPREHENSIVE WHEN...

THE COOL, DETATCHED MANNER OF THIS QUEEN SENT ICY CHILLS UP TONY'S SPINE! THERE *MUST* BE A WAY OUT! IF HE COULD ONLY SALVAGE RADIO PARTS FROM HIS SHIP! WITH SOME SPARE PARTS FROM HIS UTILITY BELT PERHAPS...

BUT, COME... TIME IS SO SHORT! LET US SPEND IT ENJOYING EACH OTHER! PERHAPS I CAN MAKE YOUR FEW REMAINING MOMENTS YOUR MOST ENJOYABLE!
SORRY, QUEENIE! I CAN'T GIVE UP THAT EASILY! WHAT IS IT THAT IS SLOWLY KILLING US? THERE MAY BE AN ANTIDOTE!


"I WISH I COULD HELP! THE ONLY INFORMATION AVAILABLE IS MOSTLY WORD OF MOUTH! WE DO KNOW THIS WAS A HEALTHY, THRIVING PLANET AS LITTLE AS 100 YEARS AGO!"
"BUT FOR SOME REASON, THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING OUR PLANET BECAME CONTAMINATED AT A VERY SLOW RATE, HARDLY NOTICEABLE AT FIRST... BUT THEN,
THINGS BEGAN TO DIE! PLANTS, ANIMALS AND EVEN WE SUPREME BEINGS! SOON AFTER, THERE WERE NO RESOURCES...
THE SURFACE BECAME A GREAT CHUNK OF INERT MATERIAL... CAPABLE OF GROWING ONLY THOSE SPOTTED MUSHROOMS THAT REPRESENT OUR ONLY SUPPLY OF NOURISHMENT!"

THERE'S NO MORE TO TELL! THE SHOWCASES HOLD ALL ELSE! MOST CONTAIN NOTHING OF VALUE!
BUT, ENOUGH! WE STILL HAVE EACH OTHER, IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT!

WAIT! THERE! THAT LITTLE INSTRUMENT REPRESENTS OUR LAST HOPE!
THERE ARE MANY SUCH COMMUNICATORS HERE, BUT THEY ARE VERY OLD AND NONE OF THEM WORK!

YOU BET, HONEY! I'VE GOT SPARE PARTS IN MY BELT THAT WE CAN USE!
WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO, TONY? DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN GET US OFF THIS GOD-FORSAKEN PLACE? TIME IS SO SHORT FOR US...

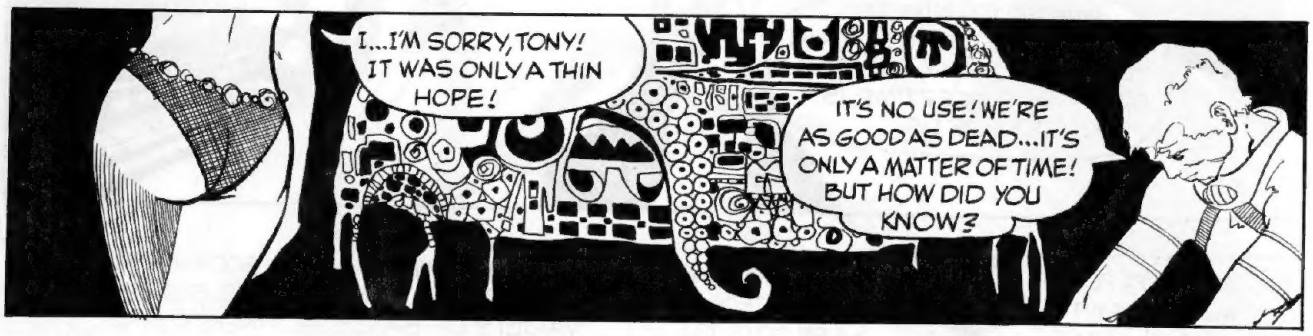
THIS MAKESHIFT POWER UNIT WILL TRANSMIT FAR ENOUGH INTO SPACE FOR SOMEONE TO HEAR US!
IF WE MAKE CONTACT IMMEDIATELY, WE CAN DO IT! I'LL NEED AN HOUR OR SO TO BUILD A RECEIVER!

WORKING FEVERISHLY, TONY SOON HAS THE RADIO OPERATIONAL, SENDING S.O.S. SIGNALS ON A VARIETY OF BANDS HOPING...HOPING...

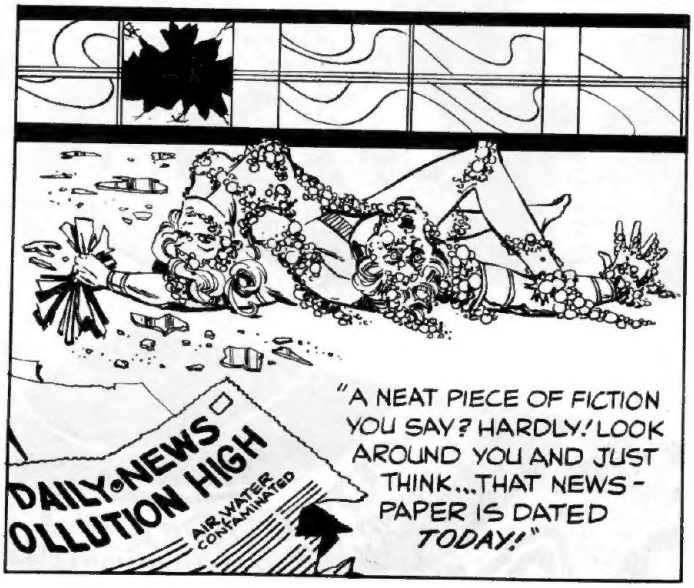
IT HAPPENS! CONTACT WITH A FRIENDLY SPACESHIP SENT TO SEARCH FOR TONY IN THE AREA HE WAS LAST KNOWN TO BE IN!

WE'VE GOT A FIX ON YOUR POSITION, HANG ON!
I HATE TO SAY 'I TOLD YOU SO,' HONEY! ALL WE HAVE TO DO NOW IS...
WAIT ONE UNTIL WE GET A READING ON YOUR LANDING AREA!

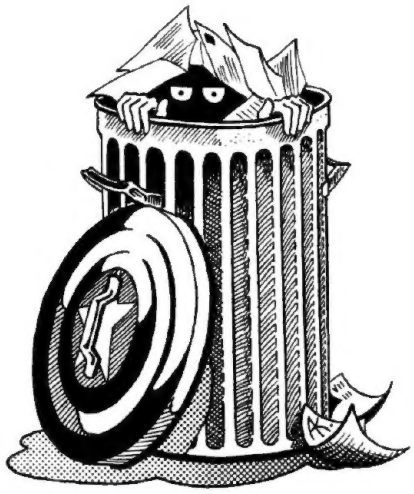
BAD NEWS, COMMANDER! WE JUST FINISHED A READING ON YOUR POSITION...
WE WOULDN'T LAST A DAY ON THAT ROCK! POLLUTION LEVEL IS TOO HIGH! THERE'S NO WAY!
PERHAPS IF WE RADIO BACK HOME FOR ASSISTANCE...



OUR PREDECESSORS WERE KIND ENOUGH TO PREDICT OUR EVENTUAL DEMISE! HERE ON THIS HISTORICAL DOCUMENT IT SAYS...
GOOD LORD! MY REFLECTION! I...I'VE GOT T...THEM!!!


DAILY NEWS
OLLUTION HIGH
AIR, WATER CONTAMINATED
"A NEAT PIECE OF FICTION YOU SAY? HARDLY! LOOK AROUND YOU AND JUST THINK...THAT NEWS-PAPER IS DATED TODAY!"

From the Circular File



DAVID WELBOURNE
5622 Calhoun Ave.
Van Nuys, Calif. 91401

I've read your column in The Buyer's Guide for some time now, and have really enjoyed it. I've learned many new things about comics and fandom from it. At a recent convention I bought a copy of Comic Crusader #15. Fantastic! I spent many enjoyable hours pouring through it and learning about Capt. Marvel and his world. Also I gained new respect for Bill Everett and his art work. In the past I found it a bit hard to take, but at the end I firmly believe it was his craftmanship that made Namor the great he is.

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT, THEN THE ISSUE SERVED ITS PURPOSE!

BOB WEISS
1506 Kaye La. NE.
Atlanta, Ga. 30306

Issue #15 was the usual high quality, however there has been such a flood of Capt. Marvel this and that, that I appreciate things like the magic special in C.C. #14 even more because of its scarcity. Ditko is a natural, and I appreciate artistically everything he puts his time into. (As he obviously did with parts 1&2 of his "H" series). The reason I wrote though, was to tell you how touched I was upon reading your efforts on the tribute to the great Bill Everett. It showed much respect and admiration for the man as well as the talent. You are a pro, you do things with respect and tradition. Let me expand on this if I may. I'm a tennis pro here in Atlanta, and I'd say the comic book media and the tennis business are two fields undergoing enormous expansion. I've found that tennis is being prostituted to the utmost. There are some pro's who put as many as a dozen students on one court for group lessons. Any pro knows four is the most that can learn from each other and the instructor at the same time. The King - Riggs grossness belongs in a Fellinni film. Every bit of tennis equipment is now a victim of mass production at large costs and a very low quality. I've been playing tennis since I was four and watching at Forest Hills since I was six years old. I feel very knowledgeable in my field, and I can tell when someone like yourself knows what the hell he's doing as well. You are putting your finest effort and sense of value in the Comic Crusader, obviously not cashing in on the public. People like yourself and Bill Wilson keep the respect I have for the comic media that is quickly dying these days.

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT ME NOT CASHING IN ON THE PUBLIC. I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO GIVE MY READERS THE MOST FOR THEIR MONEY, WITHOUT TAKING A LOSS MYSELF. IF ONLY THE POST OFFICE AND THE PAPER PRODUCERS WOULD STOP GOING UP ON THEIR PRICES, SO I WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO UP ON MINE.

THOMAS HEGEMAN
R.D. Chatham, N.Y. 12037

I haven't written you a LOC in a long time. I felt I owed you one on C.C. #15 if only to compliment you on the color cover. Actually I believe in writing LOC's to all editors since I believe they deserve some kind of feedback. My only trouble writing to you about Comic Crusader is trying not to have a "Wow, Gee Whiz" type letter. You, however, insist on making this difficult.

Now about the color cover. Since I know you don't believe in taking business losses for income tax purposes I must assume sales are up to allow you to have such a nice cover. I hope to see more of them. I'm also getting my hopes up for some big improvement I can't even imagine. The last time you had a color cover your next issue started the wrap-around cover era of your zine. God only knows what's waiting in the wings for #16.

All your articles were excellent but for me the high points were the talk with the brothers Binder and Kurt Schaffenberger. Recently there has been a lot of attention paid C.C. Beck. It's nice to get a look at some others responsible for Captain Marvel. The unpublished Binder and Raboy model sheets were a welcome addition to a really beautiful article.

I really enjoy the "H" series. Once again I find myself in disagreement with Steve Ditko's philosophy, but the story was very good and unlike the last Mr. A., which appeared in Crusader, the philosophy did not get in the way of telling the story.

Once again, in other words, you have put together a beautifully balanced magazine. Even were you to win an award for Best Fan Artist (regrettably a dim possibility - too many people have other first choices) it would not be the most appropriate award. The most appropriate award for you would be Best Fan Editor, a category which, unfortunately, does not exist. Ah, the petty bothers of being great.

COLOR COVERS ARE BASED ON THE SMALL PROFIT MADE ON EACH ISSUE. WHEN ENOUGH PROFIT IS COLLECTED, I CAN RUN SOMETHING SPECIAL LIKE A COLOR COVER. THERE IS SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THE WORKS. MORE ABOUT THAT NEXT ISSUE! LAST ISSUE GAVE ME A LOT OF PERSONAL SATISFACTION. THE PEOPLE INVOLVED WERE SOME OF THE FINEST I'VE EVER COME IN CONTACT WITH!

NAT PINE
318 Washington Hwy.
Snyder, N.Y. 14226

I enjoyed C.C. #15 a lot. The articles and art were of a very good caliber, seldom enjoyed in other fanzines of the same price. The interviews could have been longer especially the Dave Cockrum one and the Binder interview didn't have enough art by Jack Binder. The Capt. Marvel vs. Sivana was far too long and besides the re-birth of the Capt. Marvel craze has used up its originality. The hero "H" series by Steve Ditko was very good to my amazement and a welcome change from his Mr. A. character. I guess my real complaint is that the zine is too short. I like it so much I don't want it to end.

ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT, NAT? THERE WERE JUST SO MANY QUESTIONS I COULD ASK DAVE ABOUT CAPT. MARVEL JR. THE INTERVIEW WAS BASICALLY ABOUT HIS WORK ON THE CHARACTER. IT DID, HOWEVER, INCORPORATE A LOT OF INFO ON DAVE IN THE BARGAIN. GLAD YOU ENJOYED THE BINDER ART. C.C. SHORT? IT'S 40 REDUCED PAGES (44 this issue). EACH PAGE OF C.C. IS THE EQUIVALENT OF 3 FULL SIZED TYPED PAGES.

COMIC CRUSADER 17

In this issue we visit DEATH, Stan Pitt, Green Lantern and Green Arrow and a very unusual new Steve Ditko strip. Price: $1.00

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